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# GANDHI IN INDIAN POLITICS



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*and*

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## Introduction

SINCE HIS ASSASSINATION, GANDHI HAS MOSTLY REMAINED a monopoly of the Congress party and the Gandhian establishment. Each group was interested in only those aspects of his life and thought which were compatible with its own particular needs and outlook. In either case, the Mahatma was looked upon as a source of ultimate wisdom which, even if difficult for ordinary men to follow, should provide an unfailing standard of reference. To the Congress party, Gandhi's name was a mascot which was expected to protect it against the retribution that generally follows in the wake of arrogance and moral degeneration. To orthodox Gandhians, it provided a justification for their continued existence in a country which was becoming more and more unlike what Gandhi himself had hoped India to be after the end of foreign rule. Neither group was therefore interested in studying Gandhi as a complex and profoundly moving human phenomenon in a society that is notorious for callousness to its members and an intellectually over-simplified view of men and events. There were, no doubt, non-conformist Gandhians like Nirmal Kumar Bose for whom Gandhi was both a leader to follow and a subject to study in a spirit of scientific detachment. But they were like a

drop in the ocean. No effort was spared by the self-appointed custodians of Gandhi's memory to see to it that no truth which they considered undesirable should come to light. If they did not succeed, it certainly was not for want of trying.

One result of the situation described above has been that a distorted view of Gandhi has become almost universally prevalent in India, especially among those who came of age after the country became free. For instance, Gandhi was secular in his view of the state and his ideal was that of a philosophical anarchist. While he had strong convictions on almost every question under the sun, he did *not* wish them to be imposed on others through governmental action. His economic philosophy was a sort of syndicalism with the role of the state confined to the minimum necessary for ensuring the economic viability and independence of small groups. While deeply attached to Hinduism and the cow, he did not favour a legal ban on cow-slaughter. And yet, most people today believe that Gandhi was opposed to economic equality as democratic socialism understands it today. Worse still, Gandhi has been represented by Marxists and Humanists as an apologist of vested interests in land and industry and as a spokesman of the authoritarian spirit of the Hindu tradition. And, finally, he is charged with having advocated that religion should play an important, though beneficent, role in public life. As stated above, none of this is true. What is more, Gandhi's views on certain vital problems of the Indian society, such as the attitude to work, public hygiene, sense of civic responsibility and self-reliance, were remarkably modern in spite of the religious idiom he often employed in expressing them. It is not possible to deal in this Introduction with all the points mentioned above.<sup>1</sup> We shall therefore consider only a few of them here.

<sup>1</sup> For details, see N. K. Bose, *Selections from Gandhi* (2nd edn. 1957) Navajivan Publishing House, Ahmedabad and *Studies in Gandhism* (3rd edn. 1962) also by N. K. Bose, Cal-

Gandhi's commitment to truth and freedom took precedence over everything else, and truth for him was not something that was handed down from generation to generation of wise men. To the end of his life he was constantly experimenting in a variety of fields—diet, sex, non-violence, village economics, education, and even the alphabet. Such a man could never be a worshipper of authority, however great, either of men or of the scriptures he sometimes swore by. The only dictate he followed was that of his 'inner voice', which for Gandhi was only another name for his conscience. And conscience, again, was nothing but man's moral sense informed by reason. As early as 1920, Gandhi wrote in *Young India*: 'I reject any religious doctrine that does not appeal to reason and is in conflict with morality. I tolerate unreasonable religious sentiment *when it is not immoral*' (emphasis added). In other words, for Gandhi the theologic component of religion was subject to the limitations imposed by reason on any system of beliefs. Its aesthetic<sup>2</sup> component, on the other hand, was more free, being subject only to the demands of morality. What seems to distinguish Gandhi's view of religion from, say, that of Roy's is therefore not so much the approach to religion as the intellectual frame with reference to which each formulates his judgment. Roy was incomparably better equipped in the sciences of nature and man, which are indispensable for an adequate understanding of the phenomenon that religion is. Scientifically Gandhi's was a relatively untutored mind, and it is therefore all the more surprising that his approach to religion, as distinct from his belief in it, was so close to the modern position.

cutta; also V. S. Naipaul, *An Area of Darkness*, Andre Deutsch, London 1962.

<sup>2</sup> For the sense in which 'theologic' and 'aesthetic' are used here, see 'Tradition and Modernity in India' in my *Planning for Democracy and Other Essays*, Manaktalas, Bombay 1967, p. 159.

Indeed, precisely because of the limited nature of his scientific equipment, Gandhi could think of ascribing to religion the role it originally had. For according to him, 'religion which takes no account of practical affairs and does not help to solve them, is no religion',<sup>3</sup> which is a statement of the theologic role of religion mentioned above. However, this does not imply that religion is to intrude into public life. On the contrary, Gandhi stood for a secular state, which would have 'nothing to do with religion'. He was opposed to 'state aid, partly or wholly, to religious bodies' and did not believe that 'the state can concern itself or cope with religious instruction'. For him, 'religion was a personal matter and if we succeeded in confining it to the personal plane, all would be well in our political life'.<sup>4</sup>

Again, religion being a personal matter did not mean that it was above 'the common law of the land'. The Law, like religion itself, was in turn subject to the dictates of reason and morality. If these views of Gandhi are taken in conjunction with his views on other subjects it will be clear that Gandhi would have favoured, for instance, a modernization of Muslim personal law, especially insofar as it concerned polygamy and women's rights of inheritance.

Gandhi's political and economic ideas followed from his concern for individual freedom and were calculated to keep the power of the state to the minimum that was required for a civilized and morally satisfying life. His theory of trusteeship was, for example, meant to end the exploitation of workers and gross inequalities of income as well as to prevent a centralization of power in the hands of the state. Gandhi wanted the legal ownership of the means of production to vest in the trustee but the trustee could not nominate his successor except with the approval of the government. Also, the trustee's commission was to be restricted to an amount that would be reasonable for

<sup>3</sup> *Young India*, May 7, 1925.

<sup>4</sup> *Harijan*, May 16 and 23 and August 31, 1947.

his personal needs, the rest of the income being utilized for public good.

One may disagree with Gandhi on a number of issues—indeed, it would be strange if anyone found himself in complete agreement with a man who held strong views on almost everything from family planning to war. However, any assessment of Gandhi must distinguish three levels of appraisal. First, what he believed to constitute the good life, the values on which it rested and the underlying view of man and the universe that Gandhi subscribed to. These are matters of objective inquiry in the light of what is already known as a result of the work of natural and social scientists, philosophers and historians. While he would be a bold man who asserted that there already was a universally accepted body of knowledge and opinion on these questions, it would be wrong to deny that the broad features of a theory of man and society that is generally acceptable to scholars in this area have been fairly clear for many years now. Judged from its standpoint, Gandhi's world-view appears incredibly naïve but the human values he cherished and sought to popularize are in most cases refreshingly modern for a society like India's. The idea of the good life that Gandhi held was implied in his values and his world-view. Consequently, it suffers from the inadequacies of the latter.

But Gandhi was primarily a man of action and therefore he had to propose solutions to a number of problems facing India as well as those which his followers came across in the course of their work. To many he was *in loco parentis* and they came or wrote to him with all sorts of difficulties, some of a public character and others, essentially personal. The ideas he expressed on a number of them and the institutions he created for trying them out constitute the second and third levels of appraisal. The fact that for a little more than thirty years, from the day he returned to India till the moment of his death, he won and retained the confidence of millions of his countrymen would suggest that he was putting across to them some-

thing that was relevant to their felt needs. At the same time, his failure to convert even his closest political collaborators to his political and economic philosophy would indicate that Gandhi's understanding of the Indian society and its problems was, in certain crucial respects, wrong or inadequate. What is therefore required is a comprehensive and critical evaluation of Gandhi's thought and life so that his relevance to contemporary India may easily be perceived by those who in the years to come will, as citizens, policy-makers and administrators, decide whether freedom shall survive and flourish in this land despite the bungling of the preceding twenty years.

The forthcoming centenary of Gandhi's birth should provide a most appropriate occasion for such a reappraisal. However, there does not seem much hope of its being used for any such sacrilegious purpose. Instead, one is likely to witness parrot-like repetitions of Gandhi's exhortations to truth and non-violence, his plea for religious, linguistic and racial tolerance, and his concern for the *Daridranarayan*, the poor and the weak of the earth. There will be symbolic programmes of village-cleaning, fraternization with untouchables, and inter-religious prayers for affirming the unity of mankind. Sales of khadi and products of village industries will be promoted through special concessions, and universities will vie with one another in setting up—if they have not already set up—chairs in Gandhian thought with money from the Gandhi Smarak Nidhi or the University Grants Commission. The All India Radio will break its own record in boring its listeners to death with an unending reproduction of badly sung *bhajans*, silly memoirs and sanctimonious speeches by ministers and official spokesmen of Gandhism. There will also be the usual round of public meetings in India and abroad. Some of these will be addressed by worthy men; the rest, by those for whom Gandhi is a hero like Rustum-e-Hind, only in a different field, whose triumph provides the speakers with an occa-

sion for feeling important and the audience with an opportunity for feeling vicariously virtuous.

All this will be in keeping with the Hindu character, but of little significance to a nation which has yet to gain confidence in itself. There will no doubt be some self-flagellation on a number of grounds. For, twenty years after Gandhi's death, untouchability still persists in rural India. Muslim women can still not claim the protection of the law against the polygamous instincts of their men-folk. Economic planning has mainly benefited a new class of corrupt politicians, bureaucrats and businessmen in the name of serving the *Daridranarayan*. And, worst of all, hypocrisy and violence have become the hall-mark of India's public life. All these and many other things will make men feel that they have strayed from the 'straight and narrow path' laid down for them by the Father of the Nation. But there will be no attempt, or hardly any, to examine what precisely this path was like and what pitfalls it contained; whether it is not time to think afresh fundamental questions and chalk out the path once again; and if so, to what extent the new path can run along, and at what points it should separate from, the old.

It was with a view to laying the basis for such an examination that the Indian Committee for Cultural Freedom requested Professor Nirmal Kumar Bose to deliver at Bombay three lectures on *Gandhi in Indian Politics*. In spite of his many scholarly engagements Professor Bose willingly agreed to do so. The lectures were delivered on October 2-4, 1966 in the Convocation Hall of the University of Bombay and were received by the audience with a sense of intellectual and emotional satisfaction of the type that few had experienced since Gandhi's death.

The book also includes two lectures delivered last year by Mr P. H. *alias* Raosaheb Patwardhan on the occasion of Gandhi's birthday at Baroda under the auspices of the Baroda Municipal Corporation. Like Professor Bose, Raosaheb too cannot fit into the official Gandhian mould,

though perhaps his appreciation of Gandhi would differ from that of Professor Bose in certain respects. But then the aim of this book, like that of any other undertaking of the ICCF, is not to propagate any particular ideology or system of thought. It is, rather, to provoke discussion on issues that are relevant to the modernization of Indian society within the framework of its democratic Constitution. Regardless of the extent to which one agrees with Gandhi, his relevance to this process is beyond question. We are therefore grateful to Raosaheb and the M. S. University for their consent to our including his lectures in the book.

This book should have been out much earlier. Unfortunately, a number of difficulties beyond the control of anyone involved in it came in the way. However, the delay has been worthwhile for it has improved the quality of production. We are grateful to the Manager and staff of the Sangam Press for their patience and courtesy throughout the period of its printing.

*Bombay*

A. B. SHAH

5 June 1967.

# GANDHI IN INDIAN POLITICS

1904-1907

I do not want my house to be walled in on all sides and my windows to be stuffed. I want the cultures of all lands to be blown about my house as freely as possible. But I refuse to be blown off my feet by any . . . . Mine is not a religion of the prison-house.—M. K. GANDHI in *Young India*, June 1, 1921

1.

## Gandhi The Man

I deem it a very high honour to be called upon to address a meeting of the intellectuals of Bombay on a subject with which all of us have been either directly or indirectly involved. Gandhiji was not merely a leader of modern India but in many respects he was one of the great political thinkers of the world. At least, that is the way in which I have looked upon him, although I have not been an orthodox Gandhian in the sense in which the term is understood today. Probably I have been a protestant Gandhian. But in any case the subject which has been chosen for this series of talks, namely, 'Gandhi in Indian Politics' is a subject which is to me of enthralling interest, more particularly because it gives a meaning to many of the happenings which are taking place in India today and, at the same time, it may give a meaning to what is not happening in India today. It is perhaps necessary that we do apply our attention now and then to what Gandhiji wanted India to be like and what we are actually making out of the India which we inherited, and these two might be very different from each other. It is therefore all the more necessary that we apply our minds to what Gandhiji stood for and how he tried to act during the

long period in which he was destined to play a very important role in the political development of India.

I have more or less planned the three lectures in this way. Today, by way of introduction, I shall place before you not anything in the abstract, but what Gandhiji was as a man, what his humanism was like. As the Chairman rightly pointed out, Gandhiji was a great humanist. Now how did this humanism work out in his life? This is the topic to which I will address myself this morning. And this will be done more or less by reference to some of my personal experiences with Gandhiji.

I have been a fairly close student of Gandhiji's writings and in introducing myself I would say that my reaction against Gandhiji in 1921 was rather unfavourable. Here was a man who apparently wanted to turn back the wheels of science and take us back to the days of the bullock cart and spinning wheel. Being a scientist myself, I thought this was a completely mistaken idea of the role which science could play in our lives and I thought also, and I still think, that unless science is brought into operation in any society, not merely in Indian society, it can never prosper. The least that science does is that it enlarges our mental capacity, and helps us to see all things with a certain objectivity. In the modern world, there is great need of cultivating this spirit of objectivity. Therefore my reaction was more or less hostile; but inwardly I also felt that Gandhiji shared many ideas in common with Kropotkin, who had already captured my imagination. And thus Gandhiji had some attraction for me, though it was not very much. But as a scientist, I thought, 'Well, I just don't want to argue logically whether he is right or wrong. Let me try out in the villages how his programme actually works.' Thus I decided to devote myself to work in the villages in order to find out how a khadi organization could be built up, whether decentralization was possible or not, and so on. I did not want to judge the merits of the case by mere logic; logic does not help in all cases,

particularly when there is a lack of basic information gathered from experience. People who opposed Galileo at one time were very logical, but it did not save them; Galileo eventually scored because he had experimental knowledge at his command. So a different approach was tried by me in a khadi organization and I was more or less satisfied; and I not only gained a new experience but also a deep contact with Indian villages. This also opened my eyes to the meaning of many things which Gandhiji had already written about his economic system.

It was only in 1934 that I first came in personal contact with Mahatma Gandhi. A few months before that, I had come across a great man, namely, Khan Abdul Ghaffar Khan, and I have had long discussions with him about how he became drawn into non-violence. In September 1934, Khan Sahab left for Wardha from where he was to go to attend the Bombay session of the Congress. He suggested that I should be his guest during the Congress session. So I reached Bombay not merely to attend the Congress session, but also to visit a number of temples in Maharashtra and the Kanara country. While returning I broke my journey at Wardha and met Mahatma Gandhi for the first time. What struck me most about him were two things. (These are my first impressions about him and therefore they have left a kind of a permanent mark upon me.) One was, the English which he spoke was very much English and not that 'made in India.' Sometimes in merriment I would close my eyes and try to figure out the face of a man or the dress of a man who spoke English of the kind which he used; and when I opened my eyes, here was an Indian fakir with a very small loin cloth which did not seem to fit with the kind of language he used.

Long afterwards, when I was with him in Noakhali, an interesting incident occurred. One day, when he observed his weekly silence, he gave me a small note in Hindi, which I can read as well as I read Bengali; but there was one word in his note where I got stuck. I spent about two minutes trying to decipher what he had written

while he sat in front watching me read. But I read it wrong every time. After a little while he wrote that I should not waste the 'nation's time' in this manner and henceforth all notes to me would be in English. This was the kind of person Gandhi was. The second impression which he deeply left on me was the completely ordered kind of life which he lived. Some people used to say in jest that he was a slave to none except to time and his watch. It was natural for him; otherwise he would never have been able to carry out all the work which he succeeded in accomplishing in the course of his life. These two struck me very much even during the first meeting. Later on, I have had many discussions with him; particularly with regard to his favourite theory of trusteeship. He had a very original theory about trusteeship; and I had often tried to pick holes in it. On one such occasion, in great merriment, he suddenly broke into laughter and said, 'Thousands of people look upon me as a Mahatma, you don't seem to care for me as a Mahatma, why don't you have a little more respect for me?' I said, 'I have very great respect for you and it is only because of that I am arguing with you.'

During my first meeting with Gandhiji we went out on a walk together. He walked fairly fast; and when we reached the end of a mile, he turned round, and we started to walk back home. On the way, he picked up some blocks of stone from the ground and heaved them in a *chaddar* upon his shoulder. Almost everybody did the same; but I asked Abdul Ghaffar Khan, 'What does this mean?' He said, 'Just pick up some stones, I will tell you the reason afterwards.' I followed his advice; and when we returned to the *ashrama*, I discovered that there was a small mound of similar stones in the backyard. Khan Saheb explained to me, 'The Mahila Ashram is built a little away, about a furlong, from the main road and an approach road is to be built. So Gandhiji called a contractor and ascertained how much it would cost in materials and how much in labour. The decision was

then taken that every morning and evening, we should bring some blocks of stone and when the required quantity was accumulated, the contractor might be entrusted with the task of building the road.' I asked Khan Saheb what all this meant. If we wanted a road, we can call for contributions from some people. If we don't want to approach rich people, poor people can be asked to make small contributions instead. Khan Saheb said, 'No, Gandhiji's idea is to involve all the people he possibly can in the making of the road; for this is an educative process.' Then I suddenly understood what he meant by building a road. It wasn't really the physical fact of building the road but the change which will come to the people of the *ashrama* who would participate in building the road.

Later on I saw him constantly, in Noakhali, in other places also, and in Calcutta when my feeling has been that he always tried to gather in all kinds of people and make them participate in a new adventure. He was an educator. Long afterwards, in the course of one of my travels I came across a very great person, Mrs Pearl Buck, in America and she wanted me to tell her what I thought about Gandhiji. I said, 'I won't tell you what I think about Gandhiji but will try to tell you some stories about him.' After having listened to some of the stories, her remark was, 'He was a very great educator.' I thought she was right. He was indeed one of the great educators of mankind.

Long afterwards when he decided to go to Noakhali, his choice accidentally fell upon me. He wanted to face the Muslim peasants personally and alone. But as the Bengali peasant would not understand his Hindustani, he chose me to act as his translator and attendant.

What struck me in Noakhali when he went there was that he first wanted to make sure of all the facts himself; for exaggeration is natural when people become excited. Where 300 people had been killed, the first reports said that the number was 5,000. The same kind of exaggera-

tion was evident in the Muslim League's report on the number of casualties in Bihar. So his first object was to find out exactly what had happened during the killings of October 1946. In the meantime I had to prepare a short note for him about the economic condition of Noakhali. In it I had already said that the population was 82% Muslim and 18% Hindu; while 75% of the property belonged to the 18% and 25% to the rest. When Gandhiji read this he said, 'Then why is it called a communal disturbance'? What he believed was that probably the Muslim rich in order to save their property had turned this violence in the Hindu direction. Instead of allowing it to be a breach between the rich and the poor, they had manipulated it in such a manner that all the anger was not against the rich as rich, but against the Hindu rich and, along with it, against the Hindu poor.

As Gandhiji tried to verify all the facts which had been placed before him, he went from village to village and slowly came to conclusions of his own. The second thing which he did was to appeal to the Muslims to whom he said, 'Why did you attack your neighbours? What had they done?' They did not have an answer, except that they were fighting the Hindus, who were their 'enemies.' Apparently, most of the peasants did not know why they were fighting. Gandhiji said to them, 'You should bring back all your neighbours who have run away or have been converted to Islam for fear of losing their lives.' Very ugly things had happened during the disturbances; war is always ugly.

To the comparatively prosperous Hindus his appeal was, 'Your education has been paid for by the poor villagers. You have inherited houses and wealth. But I do not want to quarrel with you on that score if you have been born in a rich family; but what I want you to do is this: If you have received education at the cost of the poor, then you have to pay back your debt to the people. Ask yourself, how do they profit by your learning?' There were doctors and engineers who had come to see him, who

mostly lived in the towns of East Bengal, Dacca or Chandpur, to which they had migrated from the villages. But the people who had paid for their education still lived in poverty and ignorance in the villages. So he advised them to perform a penance and return to the villages for rendering free service to the peasants. And one of them said to him, 'It is not practicable. How can I come with my patients in the city, and all my children who are being educated there? In the villages there are also no amenities of life.' Gandhiji said, 'All right, I am a *bania*. Let me suggest to you another means. Contribute one month's earning, and then maintain a team of social workers in your village. The engineer or doctor who is thus posted in the village should help to rebuild the village.' He also said to them, 'I have come here in order to teach the people how to clean the village, how to get clean drinking water, to use simple remedies for their ordinary illnesses and so on. I have come to educate them, to build up new organizations in the villages, not as a Hindu or a Muslim or a Congressman, but as an ordinary human being serving another human being.'

Later on, when I asked him if this was indeed his whole purpose in Noakhali, or there was a little more to it, he said, 'The first thing is that politics has divided India today into Hindus and Muslims. I want to rescue people from this quagmire and make them work on solid ground where people are people. Therefore my appeal here is not to the Muslims as Muslims nor to the Hindus as Hindus; but to ordinary human beings who have to keep their villages clean, to build schools for their children, and take many other steps so that they can make life better.' The talks which he gave to people were not about politics nor about big things, but about the simple things which they could do collectively and alone in order to improve their own lives. Peasants who were illiterate, and who often came to see him, would often say while leaving that he was a man who talked exactly like them.

They never felt that there was a barrier between him and themselves.

Gandhiji went from village to village. I remember that during one of his walks, he came to a village where all the male members of a particular house had been murdered. On the wall there were still dark patches of blood which had spurted out from the people who had been stabbed. When the women heard that Gandhiji was to walk past their house, they came from the refugee camp where they had been living to see Gandhiji in their courtyard. He stood for a little while when a woman came and touched his feet in reverence. They wept and said, 'We have lost our husbands and brothers and everybody. We have come to you for solace, for a few words of consolation.' When I translated to him what the ladies said, his face hardened and he said, 'Tell my sisters that I have come to Bengal not to give consolation but to give courage. Without courage, a new India will never be born.' Later in the evening, I said, 'Bapu, why did you say this to women who were in grief?' His answer was 'Where else do you need courage? When everything is crashing round you, crumbling down, it is only then that you have to muster your courage with the utmost endeavour. It is only when you can reconquer your faith that your faith is worthwhile'.

This was Gandhiji, a very different man from what we usually imagine him to be. Indeed he had not come to Bengal to give consolation, but the courage to build our lives anew. In one of his meetings, as I have already said, he began to say that anybody whose education had been paid for by the poor villagers had to perform penance for all the sins of his forefathers and of his own sin of living on the toil of others. If he did not utilize all his wealth and his learning or talents in the use of the common people here, then he had no right to be here. That was coming from Gandhiji in the midst of what the Hindus had suffered at the hands of the misguided Muslims. The Hindus, rich and poor, had suffered equally in a large

part of the district. Their homes had been completely destroyed, and many had taken shelter in temporary huts or left their homes altogether. But even to them, Gandhiji said that they did not have a right to live here unless they used all their talents in the service of the peasantry. I remember how bitter the Press in Calcutta was when this speech was reported. They asked what right Gandhiji had to advise people who were suffering. When I called his attention to this, Gandhiji said, 'These are townsfolk, I am talking like a villager. Unless the former perform this penance with courage, a new India would not come into being.'

The last story with which I will end is about an event which took place in Calcutta about the 15th August, 1947. Gandhiji had planned to be in Noakhali when the transfer of power was to take place. When he came to Calcutta, a representative of the BBC came to record a message which was to be broadcast from London all over the world as India's message to the world when it stepped into freedom. I went to Gandhiji and said, 'There is a gentleman from England and he wants to get a message from you'. Gandhiji said, 'Everything has dried up, I don't have a message. Why should he come to me? Ask them to go to Jawaharlal instead'. I conveyed this to the English gentleman; but he pleaded, 'If anybody can give a message on behalf of India, it is only Mahatma Gandhi and nobody else. Please tell him, we are going to translate his message into many different languages and broadcast it all over the world'. I went back with the request, but he asked for a slip of paper. On it he wrote, 'Ask them to forget that I know English'. Later on, on the 14th of the month, the Chief Minister of Bengal, Dr Prafulla Chandra Ghosh came with his whole Cabinet in order to ask Gandhiji what kind of celebration was right and proper for the next morning. Gandhiji was reclining on the floor on a bed of blankets. He sat up and said, 'People are dying of hunger all round; everything is on fire. Do you wish to hold a celebration in the

midst of this devastation? Go and celebrate by fasting'. This was his message to free India. I also remember that a bunch of young students came to see him on the same day and asked him, 'Sir, what is your message on the eve of Independence'? He said, 'This is a sorry affair'.

At this point, there was one event to which I shall now draw your attention. On the eve of Independence Gandhiji had taken up quarters in a predominantly Muslim *bustee*. Calcutta in those days had been completely divided into Hindustan and Pakistan. There were parts of Calcutta which were completely Hindu or completely Muslim; but formerly there was a large amount of overlapping between the two populations. This had taken place as a result of 'Direct Action' initiated by the Muslim League in Calcutta on 16th August 1946. Gandhiji toured different parts of the city in August 1947 and then decided to go to a Muslim *bustee* from which all the Muslims had been thrown out by the Hindus by means of bombs and guns smuggled after the war. When Gandhiji came to this area and settled down in a vacant house of a Muslim, his idea was to persuade the Hindu young men to bring back the Muslims. This was the reason why he had gone there. His camp was set there on the 13th of the month. When he reached the place, a large number of young men of that locality greeted him with black flags. They shouted, 'Go back, Gandhi'. Gandhiji stood quietly in their midst and said, 'All right, some of you come forward, I want to talk to you'. For six long hours he went on talking and arguing with them. I had gone to see some of my other young friends in the *mohalla* and tried to tell them what Gandhiji had gone there for. Eventually, when all of us went back in the evening, Gandhiji said that he had done a good day's work. This was about ten in the night. He had argued and argued with them until he had eventually succeeded in convincing them that it was wrong to treat the Hindu and Muslim differently in free India. So several young people went to the neighbouring Muslim area and brought back a number

of the inhabitants to the vacant *bustee* and promised to give them all protection. Gandhiji was pleased with this and said to me that he had tried to convince them completely by political reasons rather than by arguments based on humanism. India was becoming free, and they could not build up a new India if they looked upon these workmen in the *bustees* differently, either as Hindu or Muslim. What had their faith got to do with the work they did?

However, several days after this event riots broke out in another part of Calcutta. Gandhiji was naturally disturbed. A short while after, the Muslims who had been rehabilitated came to him and said, 'We are frightened, and wish to go to a place of safety'. Gandhiji thought for a little while and eventually agreed. Then a group of these men and women were given a truck whose driver was a Hindu. He volunteered to take back the evacuees once again to a predominantly Muslim quarter. Gandhiji was standing on the road and there was a long road in front of him. The truck started. It had hardly gone 100 or 200 yards when suddenly bombs were thrown upon the truck from a vacant house. I rushed upon the scene and the Police who were with us said, 'Please do not go; Gandhiji is coming after you and harm might come. Probably they are using Sten guns and Bren guns'. When we reached the truck, we found two dead bodies lying upon the ground, and there was a woman who was the mother of one of those people who had been killed and she was crying like mad. Her cloth was smeared by the flesh and blood of her son. Gandhiji came walking slowly and looked at the dead bodies and he looked at the woman and asked me to tell her, 'It was God's pleasure to give her a son and it was His pleasure to take him away. Who are we to complain?' I looked at his face and said, 'I cannot say this to the mother'. The Police took charge of the bodies. We went back and I met some of the young men who were standing at a distance of about 40 or 50 yards away in a big crowd and said to them, 'What

have you done? You gave word that nothing would happen'. Some of them came forward and said to me, 'We are extremely sorry for what has happened. It was not our doing. There were two amongst us who were not convinced by Gandhiji's reasoning. It is they who have done it and then run away. We will not allow the rest of the people to be evacuated. There are still some Muslims left in the *bustee* and we promise to give them all protection. It is a point of honour with us'. I accompanied them to the *bustee* and found a few poor Muslims. There was a TB patient, lying upon the ground; they were all shaking like aspen leaves. The young men said to me, 'We are going to protect them against our own comrades. But we have one request to Gandhiji and that is: we will protect these Muslims by means of guns and bombs against our own comrades. So please tell him that this is what we are going to do for we don't understand non-violence. But if the police arrest us tonight, he is to set us free'. I thought what a strange request this was to Gandhiji. This was in the afternoon at about 6 o'clock.

It was almost dark, and Gandhiji was taking his walk in the garden. I went up to him and told him what the young men had said. Without one moment's hesitation, he said to me, 'Go and tell them that I am with them'. I said, 'Bapu, but what about non-violence?' He turned round and said, 'This is an order'. So I went back and had a talk first with the Police. They said they had already taken charge, guards had been posted all round the *bustee* and nothing was likely to happen that night. And then I talked to the Deputy Commissioner and said to him that if anybody were arrested for possessing arms, we should be informed about it.

It was late in the night when I came to Gandhiji and said to him, 'Bapu, I have a question about non-violence'. His reply was, 'Here are men who are going to use violence in a moral cause. They are trying to protect the poor, so I am with them as far as the cause is concerned; but not in regard to the means'. I said, 'Why do you not

tell them that violence is wrong?' 'How can I say that unless I demonstrate that non-violence is more effective? I cannot tell them that violence is wrong while I cannot give them a substitute'. 'How will you protect the Muslims by means of non-violence, because you cannot be all over the place?' He said, 'I have decided to fast from tomorrow morning and here is a statement which I have already written out. You will go through this and then you will ring up the Governor of the province, Shri Rajagopalachari, and also the Chief Minister, Dr P. C. Ghosh. Ask them to come here immediately because I cannot go on a fast without their permission in Bengal'. I rang up both these gentlemen. They came at once and I remember what the Chief Minister said, 'If Gandhiji wants to fast who are we to say 'yes' or 'no' to him. It is he who has to dictate, not we'.

There was a long statement which he had written out. Gandhiji sat on his bed while several of us stood round him in a circle: the Governor, Rajaji, Dr Ghosh and Mr H. S. Suhrawardy. I was asked to read the draft of his statement. In the statement he had written, 'I know that Calcutta does not want a recrudescence of the riots, but the good people of Calcutta are just like good people anywhere. They never come forward. It is the evil which always comes forward. And so I want that the former should organize themselves and come forward and say 'No' to what is happening. If they do not, then I don't want to live in a world where the good people are always slack. I would rather die by fasting. But if they assert themselves and are prepared to risk their lives in order to stop the riots then it would be time for me to reconsider my decision'. This is not a verbatim report but the substance of his statement. He asked me to read the statement to all those who stood round. I started reading and then Rajaji broke in by saying, 'Gandhiji, you seem to be governed by vanity. Today India is free, we have the entire reins of the government in our hands. We shall use the Police and if necessary the Military to

quell the riots. But you seem to think that you can do what the Government cannot. It springs out of vanity'. Gandhiji quietly said, 'No. This does not come out of my vanity. I know that the Government have got to do many things; they will certainly do them. The police force, the volunteers of your own organization, the Congress, everybody will do what they can. But what shall a common citizen also do? Should he only sit quietly in his room and watch the Government do everything for him? Please tell me what I should do. But Rajaji did not have a prescription for the common man. It was all right for him to say that everything would be done by the Government, but he did not know what a citizen might do except to watch the Government do the right thing. Gandhiji however wanted that the ordinary citizen should also come forward, and add his little block of stone to where the road was being built. Whether the road was going to be long or short, or the stone was going to be big or small, did not matter. But everybody had to use his muscles. Everybody had to come forward with his labour. The same lesson I had learnt in Wardha many years ago was being repeated here.

As I proceeded with the reading we came to a passage in which he had said that 'during the fast I will sip water with a pinch of salt and soda-bicarb and add sour lime occasionally'. After a few days of fasting one feels nausea and it was probably in order to get over this feeling that he had taken this decision. When I came to that passage Rajaji interrupted by saying, 'But this is then not an honest fast. Why do you need to add sour lime? You really want to survive the fast, so that when you say that you will hold your life at stake, it is not an honest stake'. I was stunned by this logic. Gandhiji took a pencil from my hand and scored through the words 'sour lime'. He said, 'Rajaji has put his finger on my weakness. I did want to survive the fast. But let it be an honest fast in which, if death comes, let it come'. That was Gandhi in his greatness.

Three days passed by and then a strange thing happened. The terrorists who had been using bombs and guns came forward with their arms and surrendered them at Gandhiji's feet. They said, 'We are completely beaten. Yesterday we were looked upon as heroes, but today we are looked upon as *goondas*'.

Then everything quietened down in Calcutta. Of course, some other people who were non-violent in the sense that they did not use any arms also walked into the midst of rioting crowds and were stabbed to death. I lost one of my dear friends in this manner. And when the widow came to see Gandhi, he patted her on the back and said, 'I am indeed very happy, there ought to be more men like this'.

This was then his demand upon India—that we should pay the price of freedom, by means of our toil and blood if necessary. I have seen Gandhiji as an ordinary man talking to farmers, talking to common people, who never felt any distance between themselves and him. But there were moments like the one described above when he rose to heights for which there is no comparison.

2.

## The Political Philosophy of Gandhi

Yesterday what I tried to present before you by way of introduction was, what kind of person Gandhiji was or how we were impressed by his personality. At the same time I tried to weave into the story some of the important elements of his idealism, if I may use that term. You will pardon me today if I appear to be a little scholarly or academic. I will have, now and then, to refer to passages from his writings in order to emphasise or illustrate what I have to say. My task tonight and tomorrow will be to describe his role in Indian politics.

Gandhiji was in his formative stage, in so far as his political idealism was concerned, during the South African period. He built up all his ideas in this period and he was keen to put them into practice on a larger scale after his return to India in the year 1915. Before that, of course, he had been born and educated in India. But when he left for South Africa he had practically no interest in politics as such, but a large amount of interest in an idealism of a different kind. Now we shall leave out that period altogether. But when he came back to India in 1915 there were certain very broad ideas which formed the corner-stone of what might almost be called his political philosophy, although quite often it has been

wrongly referred to as his 'religion'. Well, if religion and political philosophy can form a happy family, one does not mind; but I do not think there was anything intensely religious about him because he was, from my own point of view, a completely secular thinker in so far as politics was concerned, in so far as society was concerned. But we need not enter into that controversy at the start. Let me present to you some of the basic thoughts which we find in his writings when he came to India. In 1908, he wrote a small book which I still consider to form the key book for the understanding of his political ideas. This is *Hind Swaraj or Indian Home Rule*. Unfortunately, the language of that particular book is sometimes sentimental. Sometimes he says things about industrialism which can more rightly be applied to capitalism and not to other forms of industrial organization, because there is not one form of industrial organization; there can be many, so that what he wrote in his *Hind Swaraj* against industrialism was not against industrialism as such but against the capitalistic form of industrial civilization. The two had become mixed up in his thinking. But one of the most important thoughts which was expressed in the book was that freedom must be of the working classes among the people. Any other freedom was not worthwhile. I have read many books on Gandhiji. Many people have quoted this particular book in order to prove how hostile he was towards machinery, towards industrial civilization, and even towards modern life. People who have quoted this book must have taken great care to read the book; but I think they have missed the most important thing, namely, that here was a definition of freedom which had never been given to India before. This definition was that freedom consisted only in the freedom of 'the working classes'. I am using his words. I shall read out just that sentence not only to prove that I am not misquoting him, but there is something else to it which is probably of a little more importance.

This is the conversation which he reports in the *Indian*

*Home Rule.* There was a gentleman named Pranjivan Mehta who lived in England. Gandhiji had a long controversy with Pranjivan Mehta as to what was meant by the freedom of India. Incidentally, this is what he said. He said that Mazzini and Garibaldi had different conceptions about the freedom of Italy. For Mazzini freedom meant the freedom of the people while in the case of Garibaldi it was enough if Italians ruled Italy. If the Austrians departed and their place was taken by Italians, i.e., people of Italian birth, no matter to what class they belonged, it was freedom. Now Gandhiji really differed from this point of view. In 1908, that is roughly about nine years before the Russian revolution, this is exactly what he said, 'the Italy of Mazzini still remains in a state of slavery. At the time of the so-called national war it was a game of chess between the two rival kings with the people of Italy as pawns. The working classes in that land are still unhappy. They therefore indulge in assassination, rise in revolt, etc.... I believe that you want the millions of India to be happy' — now the sentence which comes after that is extremely significant — 'not that you want the reins of the government in your hands'. But this is exactly what we have achieved in 1947. This is what he said in 1909. And as I have said before, this is the concept with which he came back from Africa to India in 1915. Incidentally, in the same paragraph, he also said, 'My patriotism does not teach me that I will allow the people to be crushed under Indian princes if at all the English retire. If I have the power I should resist the tyranny of the Indian princes just as much as that of the English. By patriotism I mean the welfare of the whole people and if I can secure it at the hands of the English I should bow down my head to them'. So here was a so-called 'nationalist' welcoming the English, if they dedicated themselves to securing the freedom of the people of India, of the working classes of India. He said, 'I would welcome them'.

There was a second important element in his thinking,

namely, he knew the condition of India perhaps better than many other people and this furnishes one of the reasons why he was so strongly against violence as a means for the attainment of freedom. His deep conviction and attachment to the theory of non-violence was of a personal nature. But when he suggested non-violence for acceptance by the Congress, the reason was different. He never asked the Congress to accept non-violence *as a creed*. His hope was that if it worked then Congressmen would be converted to his point of view in the course of time. Now the argument which he had against war, the argument which stuck till the end of his life from 1909 onwards, was that war could give us another rule for the rule under which we were living, but it would never give us a rule in terms of the common people; because his fear was that the section of the people who would drive away the present rulers by organized violence would themselves occupy the seats of power and never part with power, whether this power was of the constitutional or of the military kind. Gandhiji's idea was that war would never bring power to the masses and therefore his intention in India was to devise an instrument by means of which the common people could gain power and build up a new life in freedom. This was the experiment which he tried to undertake in the larger arena of Indian society. This was his chief contribution as we examine his activities as a historian.

There have been very great people who stood by their version of truth and paid the highest price which a human being is capable of paying—Socrates, Jesus Christ, Galileo and Gandhiji himself. People of that kind have suffered for what they held to be true, and such men have been born all through the ages in all countries of the world. But what Gandhiji wanted to do was not to build up a large number of perfect or semi-perfect men and then engage in the experiment to build up a new society, but to engage in mass non-violence with men and women as they were. Most people objected to his mass disobedi-

ience. They said, 'If you allow ordinary people to pretend that they are non-violent and engage in a non-violent struggle against any government, whether Indian or British, then what will happen is that after some time they will break down or slide back into violence'. But Gandhiji said that he was trying to devise a mass instrument of operation which will work in terms of non-violence. He was firm in his opinion that war will never bring us that freedom which he wanted for the common people. He was not afraid of bloodshed; he was eager to shed his own blood or the blood of the satyagrahis. One day I asked him, 'Bapu, do you mean to say that in non-violence there can be no defeat?' He said, 'Yes, there can be defeat; just as in the case of violence also, there can be defeat. When two armies fight against one another naturally one loses, the other wins. So the chances are fifty-fifty. So also, in the case of non-violence, if your preparation is not adequate then you may lose the battle'. 'So what is the good of it?', I asked him. He said 'You don't spend a single pie upon armaments, and you save a lot of money. You must always remember that I am a very good Gujarati *bania*!' Thus he firmly held the idea that war would never bring freedom to the masses.

The third important item in his philosophy was that in any society only those have a right to live who live by *manual labour*. Man is subject to the eternal law of manual labour. Every man has to produce something by means of his bodily labour. Now we people who were intellectual used to ask him, 'What will happen to us? What about Rabindranath Tagore?' 'He has given much to mankind. In his case, we will release him from the obligation of labour'. I said, 'What about us? We are also intellectuals'. He said in substance, 'You are mere pretenders. There is one Rabindranath, but there are thousands of people who claim that they would become like Rabindranath. I would not allow them freedom from the duty of manual labour, for I can hardly

trust them'. Many times this question came up, and I shall come back to that again later on.

The fourth point in his political philosophy was that he did not believe in nationalism in the sense in which we generally use that term. In 1925, he defined 'nationalism' or rather he used the term 'nationalism' but not in the dictionary sense of the term. What he said was that his idea of nationalism was that 'the resources of the country should be placed at the disposal of the whole of humanity'. He did not divide the world into different nations, into different states and he used to say that 'God never made frontiers and there is nothing which can prevent you from extending your services to your neighbours across man-made frontiers'.

Up to now I have tried to present the four points of the concept of a free society. Let us now examine how he tried to work out these ideas in actual practice. When he came to India in 1915, he was under a promise given to Gokhale that he would not open his mouth for one year but tour the whole country and acquaint himself with the conditions of India. After that he was free to do anything he wished. After the year was over, he wanted to get into action, and he had already made up his mind that society and politics could not be separated from one another. One must have the power to regulate society. Therefore he looked around for an organization through which he could work. This was also unique in him, and I believe that to some extent this was a result of his Western education. Generally, in India, whenever there is a new interpretation of any *shastra* within a short time a new school is opened under a new *guru*. Instead of this, Gandhiji's idea was to take hold of an existing organization and involve as many persons as possible inside the organization to serve not one's own end but the cause for which one stands. And therefore he looked about for a suitable organization. The first suitable organization which appealed to him was the Servants of India Society. Most of the members of this Society knew

a lot about him, about his interests and also his love for direct action for they were all familiar with what he had done in Africa through press reports. There was a strong difference of opinion among the members about Gandhi's admission into the Society; some said 'Yes' and some said 'No'. In order not to embarrass them, Gandhiji withdrew his application for membership. Then there was another organization, namely, the Home Rule League which was very important in those days. Mrs Annie Besant was its maker. Mr M. R. Jayakar was there and, as far as I remember, Mr Jinnah was also there and the majority welcomed Gandhiji's admission to the Home Rule League. But a few members of the League said that Gandhiji had many fads. He was a good man but had fads like vegetarianism, or the propagation of Hindi. Probably he might completely turn over the Home Rule League into an instrument of his ideas with which they did not find themselves in sympathy. Gandhiji assured them that there was no justification for their fears. And you remember the story of the camel who introduced his nose into the tent and eventually the owner of the tent had to move out of it. This happened also in the case of the Home Rule League. The Home Rule League invited him; and he soon began to say that in order to make our efforts understandable to the common people of India Hindi should be introduced by members of the League. In any case, the Home Rule League somehow disappeared. Mrs Annie Besant founded another League under the name of National Home Rule League. Eventually the League's Weekly *Young India* passed into the hands of Gandhiji and he used it for the propagation of his own political ideas from about the end of 1919 till 1932.

Then Gandhiji joined the Indian National Congress. This organization was dominated by the great Liberal leaders of our country, who believed only in constitutional methods of change. Gandhiji felt that constitutional methods of change had their own limitations. If

they failed, one had to replace or supplement them by non-violent non-co-operation. Gandhiji firmly held that non-violent non-co-operation lay within the constitutional rights of a citizen.

After World War I was over, a number of events took place in India which stirred the people deeply: the passing of the Rowlatt Act, Jalianwallabag massacre, etc. Then he decided to initiate a satyagraha against these wrongs. Some Congressmen became enthusiastic. But Gandhiji said, 'I don't want to involve the Congress organization'. This was also one of Gandhiji's characteristics. Congress was a platform which all kinds of people had joined for a common purpose, namely, securing the freedom of India. He did not want to force himself upon this body and therefore he said that the Congress may lend its moral support to the satyagraha movement but it would be conducted by an independent body, namely, the Satyagraha Sabha, in which there were a few hand-picked people. That was also Gandhiji's method of work. Later on when the time was ripe, he involved the whole Congress in his programme.

Unfortunately, riots broke out in Bombay city and other places also. And by and by it came to such a pass that he had to withhold his permission to carry on satyagraha anywhere. But we will come to this later on.

In any case in 1921, two or three demands were placed in the position of our national demands. One was the rectification of the Punjab wrongs, the other was the Muslim demand in relation to the Khilafat. Now while these were made national demands, something *had to be done* about them and Gandhiji framed a plan of non-violent non-co-operation for the entire nation. I shall try not to present the facts of history, but only an analysis as the facts are well known to everybody. I shall try to analyse his intentions and the methods by which Gandhiji tried to organize massive non-violent action.

As I have said, he wanted the Congress to be morally involved in the movement, and while he tried to do this

something else had also to be attended to. He wanted an organization which would spread all over India among the common people and train them in terms of non-violent non-co-operation. Gandhiji was a good general. He always framed or designed battles by taking into consideration the existing strength of his army. He was not one of those who thought of battles in the abstract or engaged in battles beyond the army's present capacity. Gandhiji used to devise methods of *progressive non-co-operation*. This is a term whose meaning has often been lost to us. What Gandhiji wanted was that steps should be taken in satyagraha which are in consonance with the growing strength of the masses. It was more or less like what is done in weight-lifting. Supposing a man can lift 200 lbs. of weight and his aim is probably 350 lbs., we do not ask him to try hard and lift 350 lbs. at once. That would break his back and achieve nothing. If a man is capable of lifting 200 lbs., give him 205 lbs., 210 lbs. and go on adding to it until he becomes confident of his own strength and can reach the maximum limit.

Therefore, in the beginning, while the Congress organization was taken over by Gandhiji about the year 1921, he wanted volunteers and he also suggested to the country certain steps in non-violent non-co-operation. He suggested: 'Let us give up our concern for schools, titles, reliance on law courts, etc. and build up our own schools, our own panchayats'. Now this was a very meagre step. At least, this was the first feeling that many people had, particularly in Bengal and probably in Maharashtra also; because there many people had already laid down their lives for the freedom of India long before Gandhiji came upon the scene. But Gandhiji's reason was very peculiar and I shall read out a few lines giving his ideas on this point. Why did he do this? He said, 'I do not merely rely upon the lawyer class or highly educated people to enable the Committee (that is, the Satyagraha Committee) to carry out all the stages of non-co-operation. My hope lies more with the masses so far as the later stages of non-

co-operation are concerned'. This was in 1920, even before the non-violent programme had actually been accepted by the Congress. He also said, 'Surely it was necessary to remove the hallucinations about titles, law courts, schools and councils. I am happy to think that on the whole the nationalists have responded nobly in regard to these items. The progress of the nation cannot be arrested by any person or any class. The uneducated artisans, the women, the men in the street are taking their share in the movement. The appeal to the educated classes paved the way for them. The goats have to be separated from the sheep. The educated classes have to be put upon trial. The beginning has to be made by and through them'.

Thus Gandhiji wanted to put the educated classes on trial. This was the beginning of building up a large cadre of wholly dedicated servicemen, and he thought that in the beginning they will come from the educated classes; but the last stages of non-co-operation will have to be operated by the artisans, the so-called lowly people and ultimately the working classes, and it would only be then that *Swaraj* will come, otherwise not. But the middle classes and sometimes even the aristocrats dominated Congress policies. By and by, they began to leave the Congress, for they thought that the Congress was no longer suitable for them. It was no longer going to represent their interests but the interests of people who did not know how to think for themselves. But a number of people, including many who had more faith in constitutional methods remained with Gandhiji in the hope that Gandhiji would prove to be a capable leader in the national war of liberation. In other words, they wanted to utilize Gandhiji, while Gandhiji wanted to utilize them for serving the cause of the masses. He wanted to enlist their support for the freedom of the masses and they wanted Gandhiji's support in the task of winning the freedom of the country, in accordance with their own interpretation of the term.

So the non-co-operation movement began, and about 30,000 people were sent to jail in different parts of India. Many asked why Gandhiji should not come forward with a more militant programme. But he was not interested in giving any kind of militant romantic programme immediately. He wanted to involve as many men as possible, and make sure of the ground he was traversing. In 1923, the Swaraj Party had already come into being and men like Motilal Nehru and C. R. Das were in it. C. R. Das said it was all right for Gandhi to talk about mass rebellion, not that he did not believe in it, but personally he did not feel that he was capable of leading the masses in organized non-violent action. But he knew how to give fight to the British within the Constitution. It was more or less like what the Irish patriots did. They worked both within as well as outside the legislature. The outside work in Bengal and elsewhere was done by some Congressmen and the Revolutionaries, while the inside work was taken over by the Swaraj Party.

At this point, there was a possibility of a split in the Congress. A large number of people who believed in the constitutional method wanted to leave the Congress. Gandhiji still commanded a majority; but he said that he did not want to use the majority in order to throw out the Swarajists from the Congress. They were equally patriotic, although their methods differed. If they had to work in the legislature, they must work from within the Congress, so that the Congress would not lose these people. Thus the breach was prevented and the Indian National Congress became a stronger organization than ever before.

In the meantime, Gandhiji went on preparing his own ground and he went on saying in those days that somehow the gulf between the educated classes and himself was increasing. He confessed that he did not know how to appeal to the hearts of the educated people. In the 1924 session of the Congress in Belgaum, as its President, Gandhiji made a rather revolutionary proposal. The

proposal was that yarn franchise should be introduced in the Congress. Only those who spun yarn could be members of the Congress. That would be their ticket to the Congress. Immediately a strong objection was raised against the proposal by many eminent leaders. They questioned its desirability as well as its practical significance. Many things had happened between 1921 and 1924. Bardoli had come, the Chauri Chaura retreat had taken place, and Gandhiji had decided to suspend civil disobedience for an indefinite period. Gandhiji wanted to reorganize the Congress and convert it completely into a working peoples' organization. That was why he had suggested that franchise in the Congress should be based on manual labour. The opposition, however, immediately came from the middle classes and the upper middle classes, belonging both to the Liberal and Revolutionary sections.

Gandhiji was not merely taking charge of the organization and trying to rebuild its membership, but he was setting conditions at the same time as to who could or would be allowed to carry on civil disobedience and who would not. The qualification was that only those would be allowed to initiate civil disobedience who had tried to rebuild the village by means of khadi and other kinds of village industries. Everybody knew that self-sufficiency was not possible in any country so long as capitalism ruled all over the world. Yet Gandhiji insisted upon building little cells of this kind by means of khadi. Some of us actually experimented with this kind of organization, found it sometimes successful and sometimes not so successful. But the point that I am trying to make is this. Gandhiji insisted that unless an organization had tried to qualify itself by constructive work and by building up khadi centres, its members would not be allowed to go in for civil disobedience at all. Gandhiji's idea was that satyagraha can only be undertaken with previous preparation. That preparation was constructive work. If you want to get ready for war then you have to do

many things : build up heavy industries, build up a war mentality, patriotism, army discipline, and so on. In the same manner, we have to subscribe to a particular economic system which is free from exploitation before we can defend it by means of non-violence. Gandhiji wanted prospective civil resisters to subscribe to such an ideal practically by successful constructive work. It was not enough if they declared an intellectual sympathy with it.

When this clause was imposed and at the same time Gandhiji wanted to alter Congress membership, the reaction was strong. C. R. Das who was one of our greatest national leaders said, 'I do confess that I am not in favour of the restrictions which have been put upon the practical adoption of any system of civil disobedience. In my opinion the Congress should abolish these restrictions. I have not yet been able to understand why in order for people to civilly disobey particular laws it should be necessary that at least 80% of them should be clad in pure khadi. I am not much in favour of general mass civil disobedience. To my mind the idea is impracticable'.

Here was the member of an upper class speaking. In spite of the fact that he was a dedicated worker and had given up everything for the nation, his nationalism was of another type. It was not the common working man's nationalism. It was the nationalism of people who believed that the common people had to be led and the leadership should rest with those who were more educated.

Now let me go back for a while to what had happened in 1921. In 1921, as we remember, there was the Non-co-operation Movement. And when the Chauri Chaura disaster took place in the Gorakhpur district of U.P., Gandhiji, against everybody's advice, including Pandit Malaviya's, decided to withdraw the civil disobedience movement. He withdrew the movement although he had sent an ultimatum to the Viceroy. In a recent book it has been said that while the nation was at the peak of its power Gandhiji withdrew the movement. Many of the

best among our political thinkers have accused Gandhiji of being afraid of violence of the masses, and also accused him of helping the upper classes in retaining power in their hands, while he would scotch the mass movement on their behalf. But in regard to Chauri Chaura, he could have said, 'I have never been afraid of violence among the masses. I was afraid of something else. If the Congress is not true to its policy of non-violence, then my army itself has become undependable. I have never been afraid of people's violence. I knew that violence might break out among them, but we will have to keep that violence under check. I can only do so if the command is perfectly followed, if the organization follows the rules of the game rightly'. Now the weakness in Chauri Chaura was that the local Congress Committee had taken part in this violence; so that the orders from headquarters had not been carried out properly. Under these circumstances there could be no forward move. It was not the fear of violence, but the fear of fighting with an army which he recognized at once as a weak army that decided the issue. In 1925, he wrote, 'Any outbreak of violence would not have brought about suspension, for instance, the Moplah outbreak. But Chauri Chaura did for the simple reason that persons connected with the Congress were involved in it.' Now this is a completely different view of the case, and gives a different meaning to the withdrawal.

A few years passed by, and then in 1930, Gandhiji wanted the nation to take another step forward in civil disobedience. Many have asked why he took the salt law for civil disobedience. He could have picked up land laws instead; that would have given real freedom to the peasantry. Gandhiji's own idea was that he should begin by involving almost everybody. And the Salt Movement almost progressed in a miraculous way. Nobody ever expected that the whole of India would rise into a kind of rebellion on such a slender issue as the Salt Tax. In the first non-violent non-co-operation movement in 1921 about

thirty to thirty-five thousand people had been sent to jail. On this occasion about sixty thousand were imprisoned, while many more were beaten up and some even shot down. After some time, there was a kind of stalemate in the civil disobedience movement. People with flags in hand would offer themselves as *balidan* (sacrifice); they would be taken to jail and next day another batch would come in their place. Gandhiji decided to break the stalemate by taking recourse to a dramatic step. His advice was: 'You must now carry war into the enemy's camp'. The initiative must always lie with the satyagrahis. He advised a raid upon the Government-owned salt godowns of Dharasana and Wadala. Thus during the 1930-32 war, the pitch of battle was raised to a higher level than in 1921. People now looked upon jail-going as nothing, head-breaking, yes, as something. When the British found that the fear of jail had gone, they also changed their tactics. They imposed collective fines and began to confiscate property, when a large number of people fell back. The satyagrahis became divided.

Soon after, Gandhiji was arrested. A few months passed by when the British Government invited the Congress to participate in a Round Table Conference. Gandhiji went to London as the sole representative of the Congress. When he went to London many people said that the British had found him out and exposed him before the world, and so on. That might be partly true, but he did not miss his own opportunity either. What he wanted to do was to commit the Congress to certain economic policies for which he had been pleading with Congressmen for many years past. He said that the Congress should represent the interests of the working people above those of every other class. The latter should subserve the interests of the former if they possibly could. In one of his Round Table Conference speeches he said that 'in the years to come India will be engaged in passing legislation in order to raise the down-trodden, the fallen from the mire in which they have been sunk by the capitalists, by

the landlords, by the so-called higher classes and then subsequently and scientifically by the British rulers. It would be the bounden duty of the National Government of India to set its own house in order, and to do this they will have continually to give preference to these people and even free them from the burdens under which they have been crushed. And if the landlords, zamindars, moneyed men, those who are enjoying the privileges—I do not care whether they are Europeans or Indians—are discriminated against, I will sympathise with them but will not be able to help them, because I want to seek assistance in this process and without their assistance I will not be able to lift these people from the mire... From whose pockets are those grants to come? Not from the pockets of heaven. Heaven is not going to drop money for the sake of the state. They will naturally come from the moneyed class including the Europeans. It will therefore be a battle between the haves and the have-nots. And if that is what is feared I am afraid the National Government will not be able to come into being if all the classes held a pistol at the head of government and said we “will never allow a government of our own unless you guarantee our position and our rights”.’ He was thus committing the Congress in the matter of India’s future economic policy.

After Gandhiji returned to India, he found himself once more in jail. While he was in jail, the British Prime Minister proposed to divide the Hindus into two groups with separate voting rights. Gandhiji tried to resist this in his own way. He went on fast, and appealed to the Hindus of India to declare that they would no longer treat the untouchables as they did, but would accord to them the same rights as themselves. He wanted them to send word to Mr Macdonald conveying the information that there was no longer untouchability anywhere in India and therefore no distinction could be drawn between the touchables and the untouchables, between the upper castes and the lower castes by means of separate electorates.

Gandhiji was released after some time; but he began

to feel more and more that the mind of educated India was drifting away from his constructive programme. They felt attracted by the 1935 Constitution. He was always slow, watching and waiting, and therefore he waited. The Congress won the election in six provinces, and later in one or two more. Ministries were formed, and this was actually done on Gandhiji's advice.

But what did he himself do? He proposed that we must have universal education. He invented the Wardha Scheme which was also known as Basic Education or Nai Talim. He said, 'My plan is to impart primary education through the medium of village handicrafts like spinning and carding. It is the spearhead of a silent social revolution'. But what was the reaction? The upper and middle classes were up against this. They said, 'What is this man going to do by tampering with the educational system?' The National Liberal Federation in 1937 said, 'The Federation viewed with alarm the decision and particularly considered the proposal to make elementary education practically self-supporting to be entirely impractical and calculated to subordinate the acquisition of culture to considerations of earning by children by their craft and, if persisted in, the Federation believed it would put back the progress of the country'. In the following year, the President of the Indian National Liberal Federation referred to the Wardha scheme in the following terms. 'I think you will agree with me in holding that the Wardha Scheme is educationally unsound. It is wrong to give to education a severely militaristic character from the very start. You and I do not want our children and our neighbour's children to be turned into factory workers'. Here was a member of the upper class refusing to allow his children to be identified with the workers' children. 'You and I do not want our children and our neighbour's children to be turned into factory workers without even the restrictions which the Factory Act imposes on its employees. It has been left to this country to discover that education can be made self-supporting. I should have

thought that a party which claims to represent the masses would realise that educational opportunity is fundamental to economic opportunity; and that higher education cannot be measured in terms of rupees, annas and pies'.

What did Mr Jinnah say? He felt instinctively that the Gandhian scheme of education would level down the difference between children who came from different communities. So he voiced his opposition to the Wardha Scheme thus: 'These have been propounded after careful deliberation. The genius behind this was Mr Gandhi and it was Mr Gandhi alone who destroyed the very ideal with which the Congress started its career and converted it into a communal body with a view to enlivening the propagation of Hindu culture'. Gandhiji was indeed trying to convert all the people of India, particularly its children, into intelligent, well-trained labourers; certainly not into Hindus of any particular denomination. Indeed this was enough to awaken the resistance of classes which were placed above the class of working men and women.

And in this manner the war went on between the middle classes and occasionally with the upper classes, on the one hand, and Gandhiji on the other. The important point is that Gandhiji never gave up battle, not even the company of those whom he opposed. Instead of founding a select party of his own he maintained his contact with the biggest democratic organization of the country and tried to transform it into the instrument of liberation of the masses of India.

### 3.

## The Tragedy

This is the third and last of the series of talks on Gandhi in Indian Politics. I am glad I have had this opportunity. It is not a formal thing that I am repeating almost every day; but the reason is that, personally, I have looked upon Gandhiji's contribution to Indian politics in a slightly unorthodox manner and I decided from the very start not to look upon him as a great religious personality. He might have been a great religious personality; but I was interested in him more in his capacity as a political thinker and a man of political action. From this point of view, therefore, the question whether he was a deeply religious man or not, or how far he led in social reform, becomes more or less irrelevant. This is the position which I have taken and I am extremely grateful to the sponsors of this series of talks, the Indian Committee for Cultural Freedom, for the opportunity which they have given me in order to present these ideas. My intention was certainly not to convert anybody to my point of view; my intention was only to present a different point of view, not because it was different, but because I thought it was worth while considering.

I tried to show yesterday how Gandhiji worked ever since 1921, when he practically took charge of the Con-

gress organization and also of the various national movements, great and small, which took place in our country. There were numerous local satyagrahas as well as all-India satyagrahas of immense magnitude. In all these we saw how he wanted to use the existing democratic organization of our country to the best purpose. He did not want to form a sect of his own. Quite often he would say that there was only one imperfect Gandhian, and that was himself. He was ever trying to live up to some of his own ideals; he did not claim to have any followers and therefore he completely refused to form a party or a sect of his own. Even then we, small human beings, are fond of looking upon him as a great religious leader. Once we convert a person into a saint it takes away a large amount of our personal responsibility. What is true of a saint is naturally not true of sinners like us; and therefore it gives us satisfaction even if we do nothing except worship him.

But from the point of view from which we have tried to examine Gandhiji, we find he was a democrat, believing in democratic organization and trying to build up democracy from the base, and also how he tried to work through the Indian National Congress in order to execute some of his own ideas. We also find that from the very beginning there was a clear division within the Congress after he took charge of it. Some people came nearer to him and some went away. There was also a more or less hidden conflict between the educated people and the masses. The terms which he used in those days were the 'classes' and the 'masses'. His demand was that the Congress should 'progressively represent the interests of the masses'. He did not expect a miracle to happen. He was not recommending the impossible to the Congress, that is, to become overnight a mass organization. But this was more or less how he worked.

In 1921 he recommended qualifications for civil disobedience by means of which he wanted power to come directly into the hands of the masses. He said that the

qualifying clause was that civil resisters must prove their worth by success in constructive work. It was not an ideal demand which he thus made. He wanted them to commit themselves to a particular way of life in which the interests and organization of the masses reigned supreme. If they did that, then only had they the right to civil disobedience. Once the question was asked of him, 'What can be defended by means of non-violence?' I am not actually quoting. The interviewer had asked the question for a particular reason. 'The society which we have inherited, in which we live, is divided into rich and poor, into hundreds of castes that do not touch one another. Do you mean that such a society can be defended by means of non-violence?' Without a moment's hesitation Gandhiji replied, 'Anything which is earned by violence cannot be defended by non-violence'. This means that a society which is based upon violence—because there can be no inequality without violence—can never be defended by the instrument of non-violence. If you want to use non-violence for defence purposes, whether it is to defend a big nation, a small panchayat or even a single person, then you have to make adequate preparation by means of building up behind you an economy of non-violence. This forms the keystone of his entire economic and political philosophy.

He was not suggesting to India merely a new method of political action, but, as a preparation for that, he was also suggesting that the economy which we were going to preserve must also be of the non-violent kind. Overnight a whole society or the entire structure of the complex society which we have inherited in India cannot be turned into a casteless, classless society just for the asking, because there can be no magic in politics. Gandhiji knew it was going to be a painstaking, and an intelligently executed long-drawn task. He never believed in magic on which some people seem to rely. The latter perhaps feel that once the state takes charge of everything, socia-

lism is round the corner. Gandhiji had no illusion of that kind.

When he made it in 1921, people looked upon his demand for constructive work as the price which he demanded from Congress workers; and they tried to follow him as best they could. But he had purchased a ticket for Hardwar, while many of those who had accompanied him on the journey had purchased their ticket only up to Delhi. They broke the journey at Delhi and did not proceed any further to the snowy mountains. But Gandhiji's hope was that, if they kept company with him for a sufficiently long time, probably they would be converted and give primacy to the interests of the masses, and to satyagraha as a means of the attainment of Swaraj. In 1924 he suggested that the Congress should be converted into a mass organization by the introduction of labour franchise. Members were to offer their subscription by the products of their own labour, not by means of money. His intention was to swamp the Congress by means of labourers. Now, naturally the opposition came not only from the Liberals and Constitutionalists but from everybody who did not wish to subserve the interest of the masses. They said the masses were not quite ready; let them first be educated and organized. In the meantime, we shall look after them. This was more or less the stand which they took, and Gandhiji's yarn franchise resolution was defeated. He was not sorry for it; he wanted to lie low for the time being.

In 1930, Gandhiji was placed in a position almost of a dictator and he was the sole representative of the Congress at the Round Table Conference. He quietly used the position by committing the Congress to a certain economic doctrine. He said that in future we were going to have no discrimination between the British rich people and the Indian rich people. He said, 'I draw no distinction between them. They are not representative of the masses and the city of Delhi which is being built is not representative of the masses. They might be representatives of the

rich people sitting here'. This is what he constantly repeated and he said that unless the masses were lifted from the quagmire into which they had been sunk by the educated people independence had no meaning. Many people have said that Gandhi proved a failure at the Round Table Conference. Well, when it came to negotiating with the British, probably he might have proved a failure. But he utilized the opportunity by clarifying the Congress case, and the case which he built up was very much of his own making. He advanced views he had not discussed with the Working Committee. He talked of the primacy of the interests of the masses, of confiscation without compensation, and so on. Some people in the Congress felt uneasy at his commitments; but there was no help, once he had been chosen as India's sole representative.

This was in 1931. In 1935, when he found that the educated people wanted to take advantage of the Act of 1935 he said, 'Well, go in for it'. But when government was taken over by the Congress in six of the provinces, he suggested to the Congress a programme by means of which his appeal was no longer to the rich people directly. *He relied more upon the coming generation for bringing in the change which he desired.* If the children were educated by means of his Wardha Scheme, he could rely upon them and entrust them with the task of building up a casteless and classless new India. By means of this completely secular education, they were to be converted into labourers, as well as educated people. But there was very strong resistance against this policy. Mr Jinnah and Mr Fazlul Huq, on behalf of the Muslim League, and the National Liberal Federation and many others, raised their voices against this 'mad' educational project of Gandhiji. I suggested yesterday that all through there was a hidden conflict between Gandhi dragging the Congress towards identification with the interests of the masses and those who thought that the masses were not yet ready and, for a considerable time to come, had

to be *looked after* by the 'educated classes'. Consciously or unconsciously, they were subscribing to either their own class interest or a combination of interests in which theirs occupied the dominant position.

At one point people asked him, 'What will be the position of the classes? Do you mean to say that all the classes will go under?' His answer was that, so long, the classes had lived upon the masses, and now it is time for them to do a penance. If they can *subserve* the interest of the poor, they are most welcome to remain. But that actually meant that they were not remaining on their own right, but had to become the servants of the masses.

I recall one little incident which took place in Calcutta after 15th August 1947. One of the rajas of Orissa interviewed Gandhiji and asked him, 'Now that we have handed over everything to the Indian National Congress, will the Congress also stand by our interests?' Without one moment's hesitation, he said, 'Of course, they will stand by you *insofar as you represent the interest of your subjects*'. In other words, the Congress would not support the king as king, but would stand by him if he acted as the representative of the masses.

Now the same kind of concealed struggle went on within the Congress between, on the one hand, the Constitutionalists, supported by those who believed inwardly in violent action, and on the other, Gandhiji representing Direct Action and Non-violence; between upper class interests and the interests of the masses. This conflict reached its highest point in 1939 when the Second World War began.

It was decided that the Congress should join the Allies in the war against Fascism, and the British Government should commit itself to the position that Dominion Status would be granted to India on the expiry of the war. At the same time, an interim government should be formed in India to represent the nation. The offer was taken to Gandhiji. He said that Swaraj of the masses would not come through joining the war. Yet the offer was

made; and the response of the Government was not at all favourable. The Congress was angry and the offer of co-operation was withdrawn. Our national leaders came back to Gandhiji and asked him to take over command and lead a satyagraha movement. The preparation for satyagraha did not seem to matter to anybody: whether the country was prepared for it, whether the Congress had become a sufficiently good fighting organization or not, whether an adequate amount of constructive work had been done, whether we had cells spread all over the country, and so on. Gandhiji took over command. At the same time he tried to make his own position clear. His personal sympathies were with the British, but it did not mean that he looked upon the German nation as a nation of criminals. Not at all. 'We are all tarred by the same brush, the British, the Germans or the Japanese'. Yet, in a war there can be a cause which is more moral than another. So his sympathies were with the Allies. Numerous people came to him and began to ask him questions of many kinds. One such question was, if he suggested that there can be a moral war and his sympathies were with the Allies, then what would happen if a large part of India joined the war? He said they were welcome to do so; but as a non-violent man, he would say that this would not necessarily lead to the freedom of the masses. So he decided to preach against all war and began his Individual Civil Disobedience Movement on that score: in order to assert the right of freedom of speech. But he saw to it that there was no interference with the war effort. He also suggested to the Allies that India could be used as a base for operations, but not at the cost of the Indian nation.

The Congress was half happy with the small-scale operation which Gandhiji thus initiated. They wanted a large-scale operation so that the British would bend down on their knees and hand over power. But Gandhiji was in no hurry. He spread the movement all over India and carefully watched its effects. The war dragged along;

Gandhiji kept his watch and all the time he went on advising the nation that the war was going to be a long drawn war; therefore, the country must also get ready for it. He wrote an article entitled 'Real War Effort', in which he said, 'The greatest need of the immediate present is to feed the hungry and clothe the naked. There is already scarcity in the land of food and cloth. As the war progresses both scarcities must increase. There are no imports from outside either of foodstuffs or of cloth. The well-to-do may not feel the pinch at all, as yet or at all, but the poor are feeling it now. The well-to-do live on the poor. What is then their duty?' Then he went on to say that we should eat a little less than what we do; depend less upon cereals, eat pumpkins, bananas, and other vegetables. The point is that if village organizations were built all over the country, if the war were prolonged, we could at least fall back upon our own resources and our own voluntary organizations. Khadi came to India earlier in 1921 in the same manner. It was a call for dependence on the people's own combined effort in order to meet one of the pressing needs of life. But few people listened to these words of wisdom, because their minds were either steeped in the desire to join the war on behalf of the democratic powers, or, on the contrary, to fight against the British in order to wrench out of their hands freedom for India.

In the meantime, the Japanese came upon the scene, and so did the INA of Netaji Subhas Chandra Bose. In broadcasts from Singapore and Thailand, Netaji strongly recommended that everybody should stand firmly by Gandhiji. There were people who looked upon the victory of the Japanese with great satisfaction.

In the meantime something else also happened. The Congress Working Committee was thirsting for battle; but Gandhiji said, 'Now, yesterday, you wanted to co-operate with the British, with the democratic powers. Your terms were not acceptable to the Viceroy, so you wanted me to lead a satyagraha movement. I initiated

the Individual Civil Disobedience movement. I wanted a little preparation all over India, but the preparation has not come, at least, not in adequate measure. I do not think that the time is yet ripe for a large-scale civil disobedience movement. It can come after the war'. This was political wisdom. In one of his discussions with the Working Committee, he realized that the Working Committee was now almost forcing him to initiate a large-scale civil disobedience movement in order to force the hands of the British. It was something which had grown out of anger, something which had grown out of a kind of frustration. He said that under these circumstances it was not possible for him to run a satyagraha movement. Then came the parting of ways between Gandhiji and the rest of the Working Committee. This was the last but one of the partings between Gandhiji and the Working Committee. He was not a member of the Committee. I say that this was the last but one, because the last was actually related to the partition of India. I will read out two paragraphs from the statement made by Gandhiji and also by Maulana Abdul Kalam Azad. Maulana Azad stated that Mahatma Gandhi virtually wanted the Congress at this stage to declare that a free India will eschew all violence in defence as well as in economic organization. He had made abundantly clear through all his writings that India should have no army to defend the country against aggression. The Congress should depend entirely on non-violence for the purpose of dealing with internal disorders and external aggression. 'Mahatma Gandhi said that he had to give a message of non-violence to the world and if he could not persuade his own countrymen to accept it, it would be difficult for him to preach it to others. The Congress Working Committee felt itself unable to accept the position and explained the difficulties to Mahatma Gandhi. You will thus see that this issue has been hanging fire for the last two years and when we met in Wardha in June last Mahatma Gandhi wanted the Committee to make up its mind once and for all as

the international situation had become delicate and he felt that a decision on such a vital issue could not be postponed any longer'. This then was Gandhiji's supreme effort at committing the Congress to non-violent defence, to a non-violent economy. He was taking advantage of a critical situation. The Maulana then went on to say, 'Once again I tried to persuade Gandhiji to postpone the matter. There is not a soul in the Congress who is not anxious to go the length with Mahatma Gandhi but we cannot close our eyes to hard facts. We know that arms and ammunition have not been able to save the freedom of France, Holland, Belgium and Norway, but we also know that human nature even after realizing the futility of armed resistance is not prepared to give up force. We have not the courage to declare that we shall organize a state in this country without an armed force. Mahatma Gandhi has to give a message of non-violence to the world, therefore it is his duty to propagate it. We have to consider our position as representatives of the Indian nation. But the Indian National Congress is a political organization pledged to win the political independence of the country, it is not an institution for organizing world peace'.

Gandhiji's answer was: 'Non-violence has brought us near to Swaraj as never before; we dare not exchange it even for Swaraj, for Swaraj thus got will be no true Swaraj. The question is not what we shall do after gaining Swaraj, it is whether under given conditions we can give up non-violence to win Swaraj. Do you expect to win real independence by abandoning non-violence? Independence for me means independence of the humblest and the poorest amongst us. It cannot be obtained by joining the war'.

Another thing had happened in the meantime. Japan had opened its offensive even on the borders of India. Chittagong had been bombed and a submarine had created havoc on the coast of Orissa. The Andamans were already in Japanese hands. Under these circumstances,

Gandhiji sent two emissaries. One was Khurshedben Naoroji. She went to Chittagong, and the other was Miraben who was sent to Orissa in order to find out how the people would react if Netaji Subhas Bose came along with Japanese assistance. How would the people of Chittagong or Orissa receive him? The two came back and reported that the people seemed to be quite pleased with Japanese victory. This was looked upon by Gandhiji as the greatest moral and political disaster which could overtake India. It was at that moment that he decided that India should make a supreme effort to free herself, even if the effort led to failure. At least, *the effort would dispel the feeling of dependence on Japan for our freedom.* It would restore self-confidence to the nation. This was the origin of the Quit India movement. One might immediately say that, if he thought that the country was ready for the Quit India movement now, why did he say a few months ago that the country was not yet ready? The answer was this. In a speech he said, 'I waited and waited until the country could develop non-violent strength necessary to throw over foreign rule. But my attitude has now undergone a change. I feel that I cannot afford to wait. If I continue to wait I might have to wait till doomsday, for the preparation that I have prayed for and worked for may never come. And in the meantime I may be enveloped and overwhelmed by the flame that threatens us all round'. The flame was the moral disaster of dependence upon the Japanese. That also came out very clearly from two letters. One of them was written to General Chiang Kai-Shek in which it was said that the growing satisfaction at the success of Japanese arms was viewed by the Working Committee with grave apprehension, and unless this was checked, it would inevitably lead to a passive acceptance of aggression.

Even before the Quit India movement was actually initiated, most of the leading Congressmen including Gandhiji were put in prison. When he was released three years later, there was a deep feeling of frustration

in the country. Then, one fine morning, the British declared that they were going to quit India and we had to build our own Constituent Assembly. I remember that many of our friends, who had spent 22 to 24 years in jail were taken by surprise. I asked one of them, 'What are you going to do now?' and he replied that, if this was honest, then they would be thrown out of employment! We had been caught unprepared. There was no anticipation that this was going to happen. When the first offer was made, one of those who shared in the surprise was Gandhiji himself. And I remember, later on he said to me that he went through the Parliamentary document three or four times. His feeling was that there might be a loophole somewhere, because it was a British document. Then I asked him, 'But Bapu, you ask everybody to trust human beings'. He said, 'The British are human beings but at the moment they were representing the British Empire. Let us therefore move cautiously, and examine the proposal from all points of view'. He wanted some clarification.

Our Congress leadership was actually taken in. They claimed that they had succeeded in earning the freedom of India by means of non-violent non-co-operation. The only man who smiled was Gandhiji himself, because he knew that it had come not because of our strength but because of many historical circumstances. His advice to the Congress Working Committee in regard to the Constituent Assembly was that they should accept it, but with their own interpretation of the document. The document had said that this proposal would not be forced upon anybody. Gandhiji interpreted this clause in his own peculiar manner. He said that if one State like Bengal or Assam or even a single person did not agree with the Congress in its acceptance, they should be able to stand out. This was the meaning which he gave to the phrase, 'that it will not be forced upon anybody'. He claimed that because of Provincial Autonomy enjoyed by

the Provinces under the 1935 Act, any Province could refuse to be a party to the acceptance. In answer, the members of the Parliamentary delegation said this was not what they had meant. Either the Congress was to accept it wholesale or reject it. The Working Committee, however, passed a resolution which was in line with Gandhiji's interpretation.

Mr Jinnah was one of the most astute statesmen India has ever produced. He said on behalf of the Muslim League that, under these circumstances, the League could not accept the offer at all. His fear perhaps was that Gandhi would probably draw the Northwest Frontier Province, Baluchistan, parts of Bengal and Assam out of the proposed A and C groups; for in these areas the League was not as powerful as he wished it to be. Gandhiji then advised the Working Committee in the following terms: 'I am quite sure that if there is a boycott by the Muslim League of the Constituent Assembly it should not meet under the Cabinet Mission Statement of 16th May. The statement of 16 May had clearly contemplated the co-operation of the two major parties, the Congress and the League. Therefore if one of them proclaimed a boycott, the Constituent Assembly cannot meet in propriety under that statement. If the British Government convened the Constituent Assembly in spite of the boycott they can legitimately do so under some other statement which they can draw up in consultation with the Congress. It should not be forgotten that however powerful the Congress had become, the Constituent Assembly can only meet by the action of the British Government. If the Constituent Assembly meets in spite of the boycott but with the willing co-operation of the British, *it will be under the visible or invisible protection of British forces, whether Indian or European*'. He continued, 'It may be said that not to meet as a Constituent Assembly under these circumstances will amount to a surrender to Mr Jinnah or the Muslim League. I do not mind the charges because the waiver will not be an act of weakness, it will be an act of Con-

gress strength because it would be due to the logic of facts. I hold it still to be the best course in order to make the Congress position absolutely clear. The second best is to accept the Cabinet Mission's Statement with the joint interpretation of it between themselves and Mr Jinnah. It must be clearly understood that it is open to any Congress individual or unit to declare its group's secession from the Congress stand which the Congress should be free to accept while still openly guiding the seceding elements. If we are to attain a certain degree of status and *strength to warrant us in convening our own Constituent Assembly irrespective of the British Government*, it will be the proper thing. We will then have to seek the co-operation of the Muslim League and all parties including the princes, and the Constituent Assembly can meet even if one does not join'.

Gandhiji's view clearly was that the present Constituent Assembly was a gift from the British; it was not something which we had earned by means of our strength and he wanted the Working Committee to accept this point of view. But he did not succeed; the Congress went back on its first resolution and news came that the Congress had practically accepted the interpretation of the Parliament instead of that put upon it by Gandhiji. He said to me, 'Do you still have the chit on which I wrote out the draft?' I said, 'Yes'. He said, '*Yeh to mera khatma ho gaya*', which means 'This is my end'. So Gandhiji lay low, watched and waited, while he went on developing his contact with the masses in Noakhali, even while, as he said, 'He was working without the co-operation of the tallest in the land'.

Eventually, when there was no agreement on the A, B, C groups as they originally stood, and when continuing riots left the Congress leaders sick in mind, there came the proposal to divide India into two. The argument which the Viceroy, Lord Mountbatten placed before the Congress was more or less this: 'Here we are in any case going away and your Congress organization does not have

volunteer forces which can deal with the situation in the country. Therefore you have had to depend upon the administration and the army. But both of these might be weakened by the rising tide of communalism. It were better therefore to partition India and have dependable sections of the army and civil administration to help you'. The experience of Nehru and Patel in the Interim Government, where they worked with members of the Muslim League, had convinced them that unity could not be achieved at that level. So they decided to 'acquiesce' in partition, although they did not 'accept' all that the British Viceroy had said. There was also the impending danger that the hundreds of princes might break India into pieces by their claims of sovereignty. So Panditji 'acquiesced', and it is said that the acquiescence was registered by him on a small note which was promptly collected by the Viceroy. Sardar Patel also more or less acquiesced. And as soon as the acquiescence came, Lord Mountbatten asked them what Gandhiji would do. Opposition might come from Mr Jinnah as well as from Gandhi. It is reported in a book named *Mission with Mountbatten* by Allen Campbell-Johnson that Sardar said, 'If we agree, that is, the Congress organization agrees, he will not oppose'. This meant that he was banking upon Gandhiji's loyalty to the Congress organization in order to tide over his opposition. The story is that Lord Mountbatten had come armed with a letter from Mr Churchill to Mr Jinnah in which the former had said that it did not matter how much *area* Pakistan covered; it was going to be a sovereign Muslim state, and the opportunity should therefore never be missed.

Shortly after, Lord Mountbatten flew back to England and persuaded the Cabinet that transfer of power should take place as early as possible: in August 1947 instead of June 1948. In that case, there would be less time for Indian leaders to think about it, because they would be tempted by the prospect of power coming to them sooner than anticipated.

After this event, Gandhiji felt alone; but he did not give up battle. He went to see the Viceroy. He started arguing with him that 'the latter had no right to divide India before quitting'. The Viceroy's answer was, 'Mr Gandhi, today the Congress is no longer with you; it is with me'. Gandhiji did not give expression to his anger; but he wrote a long letter to the Viceroy as he left Delhi by train for Calcutta. When the letter was finished at Patna, Rajkumari Amrit Kaur returned with it to Delhi to have it handed over to Lord Mountbatten by Pandit Nehru. He was trying to by-pass the Congress. In this letter, Gandhiji wrote: 'Dear Friend, It strikes me that I should summarize what I said and wanted to say but left unfinished for want of time at our last Sunday's meeting. Whatever may be said to the contrary, it would be a blunder of the first magnitude for the British to be party in any way whatsoever to the division of India. If it has to come, let it come after the British withdrawal as a result of understanding between the parties or an armed conflict which according to Qaid-e-Azam Jinnah is taboo'. You must remember that a man who was said to be frightened of violence was recommending that if partition was to come let it come through agreement or as a result of war. It must not appear to be the Britisher's doing.

In spite of these endeavours of Gandhiji, partition eventually came, and when it did come, strange things began to happen all over the country. Gandhiji decided that his place was no longer in Delhi, but somewhere else. He wanted to go to Noakhali, and so came to Calcutta. But his heart was heavy, for the Khudai Khidmatgars of the Frontier had been shamefully let down by Congress acceptance of the British offer. So he wanted to go there also and, if possible, work in the villages of the Pathans. Why did he do this? Was he taking refuge in little bits of social work to comfort the people? Was he giving up his whole political mission? It was not that at all. To my mind, and to the minds of many who have tried to

understand this move of Gandhiji, it appears that he finally realized that his appeal was no longer going to be to the leaders, because they had come to a settlement and the democratic instrument through which he wanted to act had not identified itself with the masses as he had wanted it to do. Power had come without due exercise of satyagraha. The 'Constitutionalists' had won; and power had slipped out of his hands. What did it matter if there were two Indias instead of one? In both, those who ruled were not the masses, but the educated minority. So his appeal now was going to be directly to the people.

Thus he had no complaint against anybody. There might have been moments of depression; but he had the singular capacity of reconquering his faith. To two of my friends he had said that he had not opposed the Congress because he had grown too old. To some of us, this did not, however, appear to be wholly true; Gandhiji was undoubtedly not lying, perhaps he wanted to avoid the question at the moment. For there is clear evidence that he was also thinking of some new plan of action. This came out very clearly when two or three of us sat together with him and asked him some questions. We asked him, 'But Bapu, if you really did not like the partition of India, why did you not keep your mouth shut in the AICC meeting which endorsed the recommendation of the Working Committee to which they had earlier arrived in Bardoli?' They had come with a recommendation that partition should be accepted. This had to be ratified by the AICC, which was the sovereign body. In the AICC, he had virtually said 'My views about partition are well known, and the AICC has certainly the right to reject the recommendation of the Working Committee; but I suggest to you that if you do this then you will have to find a new leadership for the whole country. But I don't see any prospect of such a leadership at the moment. So the cheque which has been signed by the Working Committee should be honoured'. This was a half-hearted recommendation but this quiet-

ened the opposition and Mr Tandon lost his resolution, and partition came.

It was with reference to this event that some of us asked him, 'Why did you not allow the AICC to take its own decision? Was it in order to protect Pandit Jawaharlal Nehru and Sardar Patel that you took their sins upon yourself? What will you say if this is the construction that we put upon your speech in the AICC meeting?' I remember clearly that he said, 'It *can* bear that interpretation, but let me tell you that it is not true. If every-time the Congress commits a mistake and I come forward to rectify it, then, when I am no longer there, they will wait for another Gandhi to take charge of the organization, and democracy will never come to our country. It is because I hold democracy so high that I paid this price'. I asked him, 'Will you allow a child to burn his hands and leave him free to experiment with fire?' He said, 'I don't know if it is going to be like that'. Then one of us asked him, 'Will you now merely wait and watch and do nothing about it?' He said, 'No, how can that be? Do you not see today that almost everybody has been swept away by the flood of communalism? They think that if we somehow secure our freedom, it will at least bring about an end of the war. But as I see it, it will be the beginning of war'. This was in 1947.

The Congress leaders had also asked him, 'What then is the alternative?' He had said, 'Another movement. I see it as clearly as I see my fingers: the British are leaving not because of any strength on our part but because of historical conditions and for many other reasons. If we utilize this opportunity in order to rebuild the Congress organization, and bring order out of this chaos, the transfer of power would be worth while. Otherwise, the kind of freedom which will come will not be freedom of the masses'. It is reported that one Congress leader at least had said in reply, 'But the League will probably start Hindu-Muslim riots all over India and that will bring about an end of all our civil disobedience move-

ment'. It is said that Gandhiji had then said, '*Isise dar gaye? Kitne log mare gaye hain, ek lakh, do lakh? Hindustan ki azadi ke liye do, char, das lakh nahi marange aur azadi a jayegi?*' ('Are you frightened by this? How many people have lost their lives for freedom up to now? One lakh? Two lakhs? If a few lakhs do not lay down their lives, do you think real freedom will come to India?')

So Gandhiji realized that the leadership of the Congress looked upon the present transfer of power from white to brown hands as the best course under the circumstances. To one interviewer he suggested that in a few months' time, people would begin to realize that they had not very much of real power. When this realization came, his idea was to tour round the country, feel the pulse of the nation, and decide upon some new plan of action. It might perhaps lead him to West Pakistan, among his brave comrades, the Pathans. To some of those who were near him, he said, 'When I go to West Pakistan, how many of you will come with me? It is going to be a dangerous adventure'.

At that point, one of us raised another question. 'Could you not have prevented partition by creating a new situation yourself?' He said, 'In my life, I have never *created* a situation. I can see more clearly than many of you. When two streams of thought are running through the whole nation I can see clearly which is becoming stronger or which one needs to be strengthened. And then I base my programme on that which is healthy and needs support. Then people say that I create a situation. This is not true. I have never created one situation in my life'. This was like a historian speaking, who knew that men individually are too small to create a situation by their own endeavour. And this was coming from the mouth of a man whom we all held in the highest esteem, and who was looked upon as capable of working a miracle.

Gandhiji thus lay low; he wanted to wait until India would begin to feel that enough power had not come to

her. and she wanted a change. As soon as that feeling began to spread, he would go round and probably build up a new programme for the masses. And my belief is that he had not given up his idea of a new political action in its proper time. He had not given up his battle in life on behalf of the masses. Because, shortly before 30th January, when he died, on the 26th he wrote out a memorandum for the Congress which was published immediately after his death and which has been called his last Will and Testament. In it he said that the AICC must do away with its special register of membership. It must identify itself with the whole nation. The Congress organization must completely wind itself up and send all Congress workers to educate and organize the people politically and also economically. He said the first step and the necessary step was undoubtedly political freedom. But it was no more than the beginning; the hardest was yet to come and, after giving these instructions, he wanted to dedicate himself to the task of helping the masses to earn social and economic freedom.

The story is probably true that after the 30th of January 1948, he was to go to Wardha in order to re-organize the institutions established for constructive work. He also planned to dissolve the Congress, and take responsibility of the new duties in his own hands. But, like a Greck tragedy, just when the last act was approaching, the gods descended upon us and we lost him. It is one of the greatest tragedies that has ever befallen India.

## 4.

### The Rebel and The Prophet

I am thankful to you for inviting me here to speak on this great occasion. Every year we pay our homage to this departed leader and guide, and remember the wonderful saga of his life. It is an education to contemplate the drama of his life. What a glorious life! Surely truth here is stranger than fiction! No literary genius can compose such a perfect poem or drama, such a tragedy and romance. Spanning a whole era and three continents, the life-story of Mahatma Gandhi has an astonishingly original and universal appeal. The face of the world has changed since he was born. When Gandhi began his lone crusade against racial domination, it was a white man's world—it has ceased to be so decisively; and this fact has invested his methods of resistance with a historic validity. An empire on which the sun never set divested itself of its possessions. He had challenged the might of that empire armed with no weapon other than moral force; the malady of race prejudice which he unerringly spotted, and upon which he, yet unknown to fame, declared war in a strange and distant land, is today engaging the attention of the world as a potential threat to civilization. The revolt of the coloured people against white domination touched off by his example is making history in more lands than one and bids

fair to hold the world's stage for our generation and probably even for the next. He had a heroic and befitting end. Even in death there was the magnificence and finality of an epic poem. It was a fitting climax to the man and to the quality of the life he had lived. Indeed his death has heightened the appeal of his life. He died in the fullness of his powers and as he no doubt would have liked to die, at the moment of prayer. He died a martyr to the cause of unity to which he had always been devoted and for which he had worked unceasingly, especially during the last year or more of his earthly existence.

That legends were woven around his name even in his life-time is little to be wondered at. He was already a legendary figure, in the great line of heroes, saints and wise men. His name now belongs to this pantheon. Our rulers call him the Father of the Nation. He is remembered as the great leader of our freedom struggle in the last phase. He is now a part of our ancient heritage. This is all in our great tradition of hero-worship. Yet offering flowers is certainly not the best way of adoring revolutionary leaders like Gandhi. We must recapture the glory and dynamism of their lives.

A new generation is growing up. They have not seen or heard Gandhi. He is a mere name to them. Most of Gandhi's trusted lieutenants and colleagues have passed away. Thousands of my generation had the privilege to work under his guidance in the last phase of India's struggle for freedom. I was not one of his Ashram inmates and have never called myself a Gandhian. But he has left a profound impact on our lives. He was the symbol of our aspirations. His life was a living example. He created a new faith and energy in the people. It was our good fortune that we were young and had the opportunity to work under him. I have no doubt that in the distant as in the near future his towering personality will rise above his contemporaries and compel homage. His message was not confined to a particular country or community, nor to his surroundings and time. That is why

he has become a part of the world's heritage. The political freedom of India was the least part of his achievement. His object was to bring into existence a new man and a society based on truth and non-violence. He wanted to build a social order in which there would be no conflict of race, colour, religion, caste or class—a society of the free and equal. There was no compromise in him with what he considered evil. His life is like a wonderful symphony. What is most interesting is to see how he faced life actually. His words and writings are of secondary importance. It is pathetic to see his devotees quoting him on every question. Bapu said this and Bapu said that; it is irrelevant. He has said clearly that 'As a matter of fact, my writings should be cremated with my body. What I have done will endure, not what I have said and written. I have often said that even if all our scriptures perish one mantra of Ishopanishad was enough to declare the essence of Hinduism—but even that one verse will be of no avail if there is no one to live it.' This would indicate how much importance he gave to actual living. In the words of Tagore he always said 'Amar jeevan Amar bani.' Deeds must proclaim one's principles if one has any. In his technique there is nothing like failure. Every experience is a discovery and a stepping stone to success. One never felt despondent or had a sense of defeat in spite of apparent setbacks while working under him.

His life was an indivisible whole. All his activities were part of a grand design. They had their common root in his passion for truth. Even behind his indignant revolt against British rule was his deep moral earnestness which was outraged by the spectacle of utter demoralisation of the four hundred millions of India's humanity, who dared not speak out their woe fearlessly, whose cowardly existence had become a living lie and a denial of God under the incubus of foreign rule and the mental slavery of a dead tradition. Not a little of his dynamic

power was derived from his impassioned devotion to truth and the importance he attached to 'moral freedom'.

His unremitting striving for truth endowed him with a clarity of perception, a mastery of detail and finally that unerring 'hunch' which aroused the envy and admiration of seasoned diplomats. It further gave him that uncanny instinct, almost like the sixth sense, the result of uttermost refinement and heightened sensitivity of the psyche which enabled him to detect untruth and corruption not visible to the common eye. Truth to him was not a rigid dogma or a static formula. It was a constant movement within an ever-moving stream of circumstances. There is no side of life, from dietetics, sex, dress, medicine to religion and politics, which he did not touch; he gave deep thought to every aspect of life and created a new approach and way of doing things differently. He was an iconoclast. He called himself a Hindu but he accepted only those tenets of that religion which his mind and heart approved. 'What I have been striving and pining to achieve these thirty years is self-realization, to see God face to face, to attain Moksha. I live and move and have my being in the pursuit of this goal'. He meant every word of this. He was in dead earnest. There was a burning passion in him to realise truth in everything he did. Someone once asked him if he was a politician or a saint. Gandhi said, 'I am a politician trying to be a saint. My religion has brought me to politics.' 'I believe', he said, 'that religion must pervade every activity of man. Truth is my God and morality is religion.' His has been a unique experiment in our times. The story of the discovery, development and progressive application of the power of non-violence is the story of the life and career of its discoverer and his struggle.

I would like to remind you of Toynbee's words: 'A fatuous passivity towards the present springs from the infatuation with the past. This infatuation is the sin of idolatry. For idolatry may be defined as an intellectually and morally blind worship of the creature instead of the

Creator.' We have to try to understand the dynamic of Gandhi's thought and action. Otherwise mere praise and adoration will only stultify and muddle our minds.

Rabindranath Tagore has said, 'When Mahatma Gandhi came and opened up the path of freedom for India, he had no obvious medium of power in his hand, no overwhelming authority of coercion. The influence which emanated from his personality was ineffable like music, like beauty. Its claim upon others was great because of its revelation of a spontaneous self-giving.'

Mazzini embodied in his ascetic but burning personality the spiritual force of the nineteenth century resurgent Europe and above all of his own Young Italy. 'The great exile', wrote G. M. Trevelyan, 'raised the Italian movement into a religion by which thousands lived and died.' The spiritual force of Mazzini is to be found in Gandhi. Salvador de Madariaga has said: 'The living sense of things can only be conveyed by life. A life instilled with unity is needed to convey the living sense of unity to others.' Such a life is Gandhi's. And that is why Gandhi is perhaps the most symbolic man of our day; for he is not so much a man of action, or a man of thought as a man of life. '*A man of life*', these words of Madariaga sum up the reality of Gandhi. He had never constructed a formal philosophy or ideology. The Bhagwat Gita was his constant yard-stick of reference. He met the challenge of life from day to day with a burning passion to realise truth and feel his identity with the totality of life around him, which he called non-violence. He was an ascetic with a passion for self-realisation. This I feel is the source of the wonderful adventure of his life, of his experiments with truth. He had taken Mazzini's stern counsel to heart: 'Make your life the embodiment of one great idea'. He personified and practised the 'Sadhana' that great men like Vivekanand, Aurobindo and Tilak were expounding: the need for a man of religion to identify himself with the sorrow and misery and travail of society around.

'कामये दुःखतप्तानाम् प्राणिनाम् आर्तिनाशम्' —to wipe the tears from every eye; to be a 'स्थितप्रज्ञ' completely detached in mind and heart — this is what Gandhi wished to do. He was a unique example of a Karma Yogin. He believed in prayer and had a living faith in God which is Truth. Beyond this he did not follow any traditional school of meditation or religious ceremony. He had developed a high sensitivity and reacted sympathetically to men and things around. He had developed a sixth sense or what we may call intuition. But he was not a mystic in the true sense of the word. He was an earnest devotee. He wanted to reduce himself to a 'zero', to become the instrument of a divine purpose. By heredity and tradition he had the practical commonsense of the Vaishya. Politics was in his blood. He understood the hard realities of life and took men as they were with all their weaknesses and frailties. This practical idealist did not forget his responsibility to the common people around. He felt that all his non-violence and idealism were not for the hereafter but for freedom and happiness here and now. Like Vyas in *Mahabharata* he shouted from the house-top: धर्मात् अथश्च कामश्च स धर्मः किं न सेव्यते? It is only by following truth and non-violence that man can attain peace and happiness. Why not then heed to the small voice within you? No great devotee in the tradition of Bhagwat Dharma had ever played for such high stakes with implicit faith and determination. *India's freedom from bondage and want* became his one-pointed objective. His God or Truth had to become flesh to achieve the miracle! He was certain in his heart that the miracle must take place and if it did not seem to, the fault was with the human instrument.

'The spirit is one in all', he said and to realise this great truth one has to lose oneself in the continuous and continuing service of all life. This was not a dry precept or thought, it was his life breath. 'One step is enough for me', he would repeat from the Psalms. Means seemed all important to him. Sir Stafford Cripps has rightly said, 'I know of no other man of any time or indeed in recent

history who so forcefully and convincingly demonstrated the power of spirit over material things'.

'Satyagraha' for him was primarily the name he had given to his way of life. It was not a mere political or social programme or a panacea. As far as he was concerned it was his mindfulness or the practice of the eleven vows he had formulated for himself and for the inmates of the Ashram. He says, 'I am myself daily growing in the knowledge of Satyagraha. I have no text-book to consult in time of need.' Satyagraha as conceived by him is a science of right living. 'I have no set theory to go by.'

He always stressed the individual. The individual was the starting point of social regeneration. To him problems of the group are essentially the problems of the individual. Nehru could never dislodge him from this basic position. Gandhi was not interested in constructing a utopia or social ideology.

With all his vows, asceticism, and strenuous life, Gandhi had maintained an enviable capacity to befriend people who came near him. He had a lighter side, he could joke and laugh. He had a few hundred disciples of various age-groups—men and women who opened their hearts to him and were happy to have him as their friend and guide. He had a remarkable public relations manner. It came to him naturally. He cast a personal magnetism on those who worked with him. To most of the Ashram inmates he was a mother and a father and a comrade. Nirmal Kumar Bose has written about the psychological problems that were created by some of the inmates who in their love for him wanted to possess him! Both in Africa and India afterwards he gathered quite a few people from other lands amongst the nearest circle of his friends and colleagues. He had a rare capacity to invoke emotional and personal allegiance of a diverse group of men and women throughout his life. This is the secret of his personality. It is essentially a capacity to love. Annie Beasant is the only other con-

temporary leader who had a similar magnetism and was a mother to thousands from all over the world. The power and universality of his appeal was due to the fact that he never exploited any one for a personal end. He never put anybody to a use which was not in the best interest of the person concerned. He put his devotees and co-workers to such work as would draw out and develop the best in them. It was this human quality which made him a loved Mahatma. Nehru with all his popularity with the masses never received such implicit personal devotion. He could not bind people to himself with the lotus thread of personal affection. He stood aloof.

Gandhi was capable of romantic warmth and friendliness. His relations with the late Gopal Krishna Gokhale and Pandit Jawaharlal Nehru were typical. He was impressed by the earnestness and sincerity of both and he went all out to shower his affection on them. When he returned to India from South Africa in 1915 he met some Indian leaders. He has said that Sir Pherozeshah Mehta appeared like the distant Himalayas, Lokmanya Tilak was like an ocean unfathomable; Gokhale was like the mother Ganga, so transparent and soothing! Writing in *Young India* about him he says, 'Gokhale was and remains for me the most perfect man in the political field. Every word of Gokhale glowed with his tender feeling, truthfulness and patriotism. He did not wear religion on his sleeve; he lived it.' He always joked with the Rt. Hon. Srinivas Shastri and reminded him that the Presidentship of the Servants of India Society really belonged to him. His was the legitimate claim to succeed Gokhale. But out of courtesy and goodness he allowed Shastri to usurp it!

He befriended young men in the Congress Socialist group and some terrorists of Bengal. He was extra warm to those who differed with him. Basically he had the quality of genuine loving kindness. However, there are striking instances where his magic did not work. For instance, he failed to convince Jinnah and Ambedkar that he was their friend and he did not ask for anything from

them which would hurt their interests. It is his human touch which created a halo round him. His identification with the freedom movement in India in the eyes of the people, both at home and abroad, was a fact. But the meaning and implication of his life was much wider. He could not possibly give to a political party what was meant for mankind. He has created a record in the adventure of the human spirit. How can we adore this noble mountain climber when we are so completely tethered to the earth and to our material comforts? Gandhi and his teachings seem to have little relevance to the present planning and social policies. It is a pity that so little has remained of the quality and spirit of his wonderful personality! The good that men do is oft interred with their bones. The evil remains behind! Why must it be so!

Now I would like to narrate a few outstanding incidents in Gandhi's life which would give us an insight into the depth and grandeur of his soul.

There was nothing remarkable about him in his school and college days. He went to England for studying law and was called to the Bar. He tried to set up legal practice in Rajkot and Bombay but he was not successful. A chance took him to Natal in South Africa for legal work. On the seventh or eighth day after his arrival in Durban Gandhi started for Pretoria. A first class ticket was booked for him in a railway-cum-coach journey. Maritzberg was seventy-five miles from Durban. When the train reached there it was nine at night. A European passenger came in. Seeing a dark-skinned man in the compartment, he frowned, went out, and returned with one or two railway officials. A third one came and ordered the Coolie barrister to remove himself to the van compartment. 'But I have a first-class ticket', protested Gandhi and told them that he would not go out voluntarily. A police constable was called. He took the protesting Indian by hand and pushed him out of the compartment. His luggage was pitched out after him. He refused to go

into another compartment. He was stranded on the platform. The train started. Leaving the luggage where it was, he went and sat in the waiting room. He had only a hand-bag with him. There was a chill blast. His overcoat was in the luggage. But he dared not ask for it, lest he should be insulted again. There was no one with him. There was no light in the room. Numbed in body and mind he sat and shivered the whole night, debating within himself whether he should break his engagement with Dada Abdulla Sheth's firm and return to India, or whether he should proceed to Pretoria not minding the insults, fight for his rights and return to India after finishing the case. By the time the grey of the morning had begun to spread over the surrounding hills his mind was made up. He would stay on and fight and face all hardships that might come in his way; fight, not for the redress of personal wrongs but against the deep-seated malady of which his own experience was but a superficial symptom. He was face to face with the canker of racialism and colour prejudice. It was a momentous decision.

Years afterwards being once asked by Dr John Mott, the American Missionary, 'what has been the most creative experience of your life?', he recalled his inner struggle on the winter night while he sat and shivered in the dark waiting room as the one experience that had changed the course of his life. Here the germ of social protest was born. 'My active non-violence began from that date', he said. His resolve was tested in the coach-journey next day. He was man-handled and ill-treated. In Johannesburg he was not able to get accommodation in any hotel. He saw the utter ghastliness of the colour-bar or apartheid. Thus began his pilgrimage of inner transformation. He had gone there in 1893 in search of a living. He was then twenty-four. A series of unusual personal experiences had kindled in him the urge to serve. Service of the community and political work became an expression of his inner religious life. The inner quest thus led him to the way of service through which alone he came to feel

God could be reached. Far from hindering, it invigorated his public activity and added to it a new dimension. He began to study the Bible, the Koran and the Gita. Indians in South Africa were mostly indentured labourers who spoke Tamil and Telugu. There was a sprinkling of merchants from the Bohra and Muslim communities. The majority of them were ignorant and steeped in poverty.

Towards the close of his stay in Pretoria another influence had entered his life, that of Count Leo Tolstoy. He writes, 'I was overwhelmed by his independent thinking, profound morality and truthfulness. His *The Kingdom of God is Within You* has made a very deep impression on me. I was at the time a believer in violence. Reading it cured me of my scepticism and made me a firm believer in Ahimsa.' In Tolstoy he found a kindred spirit—a single-minded seeker after truth, an aristocrat turned peasant and shoe-maker in the pursuit of the meaning of life. Gandhi found in him a pioneer of the science of the spirit, who had divined the potentiality of the principle of non-resistance and had thus discovered an instrument of social action, which he was to make his own and put to use with such striking success. John Ruskin and Henry David Thoreau were the other two authors who influenced him deeply during his first decade in South Africa. He read Ruskin's *Unto This Last* while on a train. He has given a special chapter to this book in his autobiography. He has called it a magic spell of a book. He translated it in Gujarati and called it *Sarvodaya*, which has now become the name of Gandhian thought. The three principles of Ruskin that impressed him were: (1) Good of the individual and good of society are not contradictory. (2) Barber's and Lawyer's professions are equal. (3) Everyone must work on the soil or take up some craft everyday. He completely accepted Ruskin's critique of Adam Smith's economics. He also liked Thoreau's essay on civil disobedience. He called it a masterly treatise. Thoreau says, 'dissonance between creed and deed is the

root of innumerable wrongs in our civilization. It gives institutions and men split personalities.'

He changed his way of life entirely. He started the Phoenix Farm, and carried on his epic struggle against white domination. I do not wish to give you a detailed history of events in Transvaal and Natal in the first decade of this century. Two incidents are noteworthy. During the Zulu and Boer Wars he formed an Ambulance Corps and helped the war effort of the British government whole-heartedly. Even as late as the First World War in 1914 his attitude remained the same and he took active part in the recruiting campaign. His logic was that when we ask for rights and claim equality we must willingly and honestly share the responsibility and do our duty. For eight long years he carried on a valiant Satyagraha against white domination in South Africa. General Smuts made certain concessions and for a time his efforts had borne fruit.

When he returned to India in 1915 he was forty-six. For twenty years he had worked hard and developed the technique of Satyagraha. Gopal Krishna Gokhale was amongst the first few who had recognised the worth and eminence of Gandhiji. He said in 1912, 'Gentlemen, it is one of the privileges of my life that I know Gandhi intimately. I can tell you that a purer, nobler, braver and a more exalted spirit has never moved on the earth'.

In 1916 he made the famous speech at the foundation laying ceremony of the Benares Hindu University at the hands of Lord Hardinge. The Maharajahs and other gentry who were present there got a rude shock at the truth he told them in plain and simple language!

He went to Champaran in Bihar in 1917 to inquire into the condition of indigo labourers in that district. He started a Satyagraha and brought some redress to the poor peasants who were living in conditions of near slavery. Then the Kheda Satyagraha was followed by his sponsoring the cause of the labourers in Ahmedabad textile mills. That was the beginning of Majur Mahajan in Ahmedabad.

In 1919 when he started the Satyagraha Sabha to protest against the Rowlatt Act, the country observed a solemn *hartal* on the 6th of April 1919. Thus began the Gandhi era in Indian politics. From 1920 to 1947 he was the supreme guide and leader of the national struggle that was being fought largely under the banner of the Indian National Congress. He vitalised the Congress organisation and built up a network of organisations from the village to the provincial town throughout the country. The non-co-operation movement was essentially, as Professor Seely has said, the notion that it was shameful to assist the foreigner in maintaining his domination. C. F. Andrews has amplified this idea further. He wrote, 'The only way of self-recovery was through some vital upheaval from within. The explosive force needed for such an upheaval must be generated within the soul of India itself. It could not come through gifts and grants from without. It must come from within.'

It is curious that under Gandhi's leadership the platform of the Congress was entirely social and constructive. (1) Hindu-Muslim unity, (2) removal of untouchability, (3) khadi and (4) Swaraj constituted the main programme of the Congress. He emphasised absolute adherence to truth and non-violence.

The Communists and the Radicals called him a bourgeois reformist. Palme Dutt, the theoretician of the British Communist Party called him the 'mascot of Indian bourgeoisie'. But if one looks back on the quiet work he started amongst the peasantry for khadi and village industries, it would be evident how this programme gave Congress workers a foothold in the remotest villages of India. Gandhi had an organisational and practical sense in a far greater measure than any other contemporary Indian leader. He spread his roots in the wide mass of Indian people through his 'Constructive Programme'. He tried to rear a band of workers who had a religious zeal and who were willing to do missionary service for khadi, village industries, and Harijan uplift. A

Gandhi Seva Sangh was started. It was something like the Ramkrishna Mission. It was a semi-religious order of men and women who had vowed to serve the Daridranarayan living in the seven lakh villages of India. This was to be a band of men who kept away from power politics and worked with a missionary spirit amongst the most backward and submerged people. They were to be the architects of the new society he wanted to build. Most of them had taken vows of poverty, truth, non-violence, celibacy and non-possession, etc. It was an earnest effort to spiritualise social life.

In 1921 he told Lord Reading, 'Our is a religious movement, designed to purge Indian political life of corruption, deceit, terrorism and the incubus of white supremacy. The major work was to purify India. England's expulsion would come as a by-product'.

It is a pity that this grand effort could not be implemented faithfully as designed by him. The Congress organization was using Gandhi in the best sense of the word and Gandhi was using the Congress to push through this social education effort. Some valuable constructive work was done at the village level and for the progress of khadi and village industries but it could not become an economic proposition of equal validity for all time and all over India. J. C. Kumarappa's Maganwadi experiment and A.I.S.A. and various similar activities had their research centres all around Sevagram. How to free the Indian villager from his degrading poverty was the one question that kept him ever searching. His dress and way of life truly represented his deep and earnest desire to identify himself with the half-clad, under-nourished, villagers who live in the seven lakh villages of India. This was his Daridranarayan. Political freedom had relevance only inasmuch as slavery was one of the main causes of moral and material degradation of man. But since the wide mass of politically conscious Indians had pinned their faith in political redemption, Gandhi's constructive programme was accepted superficially. 'Fulfilment of the con-

structive programme is Swaraj', he said again and again but civil disobedience and putting mass pressure on Government appealed to the people and the intelligentsia and got many more willing recruits than village work over the long years of struggle. If the leaders had been able to organize the peasants in various talukas as Sardar Vallabhbhai organized Bardoli, planning and democracy might have proved more genuine and broad-based. Gandhi, for all his influence, could not change the trend of political aspirations and action beyond a point. The inertia of the people was shaken only superficially in the upper layers. The Swaraj that has emerged is certainly not the Swaraj of Gandhi's dream or conception. That explains Vinoba's *padayatra* through the length and breadth of the country for the last fifteen years in search of Gram Swaraj. He alone continues to vitalise the Gandhian tradition.

As early as September 1921, Gandhiji wrote, 'Sedition has become the creed of the Congress. No empire intoxicated with the red wine of power and plunder of weaker races has yet lived long in the world.' In 1930 he said, 'with every breath of mine, I desire the destruction of British Empire.' He was yearning for changing the condition of the common people in India.

In the famous controversy he had with Rabindranath Tagore in the early days of non-co-operation he had written, 'Little do town-dwellers know how the semi-starved masses of India are slowly sinking to lifelessness. .... No sophistry, no jugglery in figures can explain away the evidence the skeletons in many villages present to the naked eye. I have no doubt that both England and town-dwellers of India will have to answer if there is a God above for this crime against humanity which is perhaps unequalled in history.' His deep anguish for our social irresponsibility and the sub-human level of life of our teeming millions is expressed in every word of the utterance. India lives in the huts and hamlets. India's progress whether in education, health or

material well-being must be judged by the condition of the man and woman behind the plough in the village.

Speaking at the first Round Table Conference he expressed the quintessence of India's nationalism. He said, 'The Congress represents in its essence the dumb and semi-starved millions scattered over the length and breadth of the land in its seven lakh villages. Every interest which is worthy of protection has to subserve this interest and if there is a genuine clash I have no hesitation in saying on behalf of the Congress that the Congress will sacrifice every interest for the sake of the interests of the dumb millions'. Let us remember this is no flourish of a demagogue but the sincere sentiment of one who spoke as the tribune of the people. Being so completely occupied with the conception of freedom from want and slavery he was fascinated by the programme of regional self-sufficiency where every man would be able to hold his head high and be gainfully employed and contented. This was his version of 100% Swadeshi. He had not developed any abstract theory of government. When Nehru and the Congress came to power they accepted Gandhiji as their guide, but they had little in common with his basic approach and perspective. Nehru as the Prime Minister of India and Gandhi belong to two different and separate categories. In Gandhiji's *Hind Swaraj* which he wrote in 1908 he has characterised modern civilization as a 'disease' and a 'nine days' wonder' for it takes note neither of morality nor of religion. Pyarelal in the first volume of the *Last Phase* has given a small account of Gandhiji's approach to governing the country democratically. He was anxious that the Congress Ministers should declare that they would not employ the police and the military for the maintenance of internal order but would rely instead *on the active co-operation of the people to isolate and neutralise the anti-social elements*. How this could be done was indicated by Gandhiji to B. G. Kher, the Chief Minister of Bombay who came to consult him in the second week of August 1946. An all-India

postal strike was in progress. It threatened to take an ugly turn. It had caused considerable anxiety to the Congress government.

'Does it not mean that the Congress has lost its hold on the people?', Gandhiji asked Kher. 'No,' answered Kher, 'but the Congress has not spoken with one mind and that has confused the public mind.'

'You should reason with the strikers and the people', Gandhiji suggested, 'warn them of the danger, tell the electorate either to do their part or choose other deputies and resign if they or the people do not listen to you.'

Kher demurred. They owed a responsibility to the country. Were they to abdicate it and abandon the country to sinister forces? That is what the agitators would welcome. Then they could create chaos, he said.

*'That is the only way in which democracy can function'*, replied Gandhiji. 'It will educate the people. Once the people realise that the Congress won't carry on its rule by force they will cease to act thoughtlessly or in an irresponsible manner and the sinister forces will be sterilised.' He was convinced that if the ministers played their part the people would not fail to respond and an antidote would be found to the menace of communal violence which threatened not only the independence of India but even the conception of India as an undivided entity. This experiment or approach has never been tried out anywhere in India during the last eighteen years!

A great demonstration of Gandhiji's inner compassion and fearless service was given in the last years of his life, when he worked in Noakhali in East Bengal and then in Bihar to put down the flames of communal frenzy of the most brutal variety. He was opposed to the partition of the country. When freedom came and there were celebrations all over he was striving with all his energy in West Bengal to preserve peace and harmony between the two communities. Lord Mountbatten called his effort the 'one man Boundary Force.' But the way he did his *pada-*

yatra, barefoot and on half-diet, for some months in Noakhali and trekked from village to village trying to soothe the suffering men and women and imparting courage to them and awakening a sense of elementary decency in the Hindus and Muslims alike will remain a glorious example of his faith and fervour. He distributed his nearest colleagues and helpers in the surrounding villages and remained almost alone. He said the call of Noakhali had come to him as an inner directive. 'I have come here to wipe away the tears of suffering sisters.' He told the Hindus that they must not run away from their homes, even if they happened to be small in numbers.

His inner greatness was vindicated nowhere so vividly as it was in his peace mission in Noakhali. His ultimate martyrdom in Delhi a year later was a fitting climax to this heroic life of high spiritual adventure.

He was a unique person! It is a great pity that we have relegated him to our pantheon and have lost contact with his vibrant thought.

Vinobaji and Dr Martin Luther King in the U.S.A. are the only two men who seem to carry on the Gandhi tradition further and enrich it by further research and action. His name in India has become just a trade mark! This is probably the fate of all prophets all over the world. Einstein was right when he said 'Generations to come, it may be, will scarcely believe that such a one as this ever in flesh and blood walked upon this earth.'

## 5.

### The Impact on Posterity

**P**YARELAL, GANDHI's biographer says in his introduction to the first volume of the *Last Phase*, 'It is vital for us to know the road on which he set us and that by which we arrived and where the two bifurcated. We must understand where we are today and whither bound and whether that is the goal which the Father of the Nation had envisaged for the India of his dreams.'

'Almost the first thing that any foreign dignitary visiting Delhi does is to visit Rajghat to pay homage to Gandhi. Before he leaves India he invariably ends by asking: Where is Gandhi in India to-day? This is a question which every one of us owes to himself, to India, for whom Gandhi lived and died, to the world, to ask and answer.'

At least when we celebrate the anniversary of Gandhi's birth or death we ought to give serious thought to this question. I would like to say that it is no good our taking up a sanctimonious or 'holier than thou' attitude and to put all the blame on Nehru and his government or on the the plan of economic development and complain that these had queered the pitch and caused deviation from Gandhi's path. We must begin by accepting the fact that truth and non-violence and the way of life

based on them which Gandhi practised and preached was never accepted as a creed or way of life by most of those who were in the national movement. They were frankly accepted as an expediency. Except for the small band, who like the Jesuit monks had taken the Ashram vows and its discipline of life, truth, non-violence, non-possession, etc. were not for the vast body of Congress workers binding principles in their personal lives. They had accepted truth and non-violence as a political necessity. Twice during the freedom struggle the Congress Working Committee declared openly that they were unable to follow Gandhi's high principles and therefore released him from leadership. It was a straightforward and open avowal of a fact. If Gandhi was just a saint in our own or in the Christian tradition, he would not have accepted followers or agreed to lead them when he knew clearly that they did not subscribe to his creed of truth and non-violence as a principle of life.

He wanted however to demonstrate the power of non-violence and convince the people that it was a practical remedy for the weak and the meek to gain their freedom. He often said, 'I believe that non-violence is infinitely superior to violence, forgiveness more manly than punishment. Strength does not come from physical capacity. It comes from an indomitable will. Non-violence does not mean meek submission to the will of the evil-doer but the pitting of one's whole soul against the will of the tyrant'. He also said, 'I would risk violence a thousand times rather than emasculation of the race. I would rather have India resort to arms to defend her honour than that she should in a cowardly manner become or remain a helpless victim to her own dishonour.' He was content if people accepted honestly non-violence as a policy. The practical results, he hoped, would convert them ultimately to the creed of non-violence.

Some scholars and professional psychologists and philosophers have criticised Gandhi for the use of the term 'non-violence' as an equivalent of peaceful resistance, in-

dividual or collective. In their view non-violence is another word for love or complete *Advaita*. It cannot be partial or restricted to politics only. However, it should be recognised that Gandhi considered 'non-violence' as a more suitable expression for peaceful resistance than the word 'passive resistance'. For him, non-violence was an active principle. It is the name he gave to his political and social strategy of peaceful resistance; it stands up fearlessly to the aggressor and suffers the consequences stoically. Utter fearlessness is the central fact of non-violence. It also connotes brave endurance without retaliation or anger. It was part of his new technique. It was an exercise in 'mass discipline'. A handful of British rulers could rule this sub-continent easily because of the fear they had put in people's hearts. India to a large extent was and continues to be a feudal society. Gandhi wanted to shake off fear from the minds and hearts of people and to teach them the art of disciplined collective action. He was therefore willing to sugar-coat the remedy of peaceful resistance by dangling the prospect of immediate results. He was content if the mass of people showed a minimum of discipline and restraint. In South Africa where he developed this technique of peaceful collective mass resistance he had to deal with the illiterate and submerged mass of indentured labourers who had gone to Africa in search of employment. He succeeded in creating bonds of social affinity amongst them and giving them a backbone and a will to resist at least for the time being.

Gandhi was a practical idealist. He had no ready-made theory or formula. He moved step by step. His starting point and concern was the individual. He succeeded in imparting fearlessness and courage to the common people. He was the guide and high priest of non-violence. He was trying to wait on God and serve him as selflessly as he could. He was inspired by the highest purpose. He wanted the good of all. He had no ill-will or hatred towards anyone in his heart. It was an essential pre-

requisite of every struggle which he led that he should place his 'cause' on an indisputably superior moral level against his opponent. His eleven points before the 1930 satyagraha and the whole symbolical basis of his satyagraha in 1940 illustrates this vital aspect of his strategy of mass struggles. Thus every struggle became a crusade for truth and justice. He often had recourse to fasts to strengthen the passive resistance of the people. His first political fast in Ahmedabad during the labour strike in 1918 had an obvious element of coercion. But for him there was no impurity or sin in exerting moral pressure because he could stand up before his God and with his hand on his heart say that acceptance of arbitration was as much in the interest of the mill-owners as it was in the interest of labour. This subjective approach of Gandhi was a characteristic feature of his social strategy.

Before Gandhi's advent, there were only two methods of political action that were known and practised by the people. The first was one of petition and entreaty—appeals for charity and justice. The second was of retaliation by physical force. Gandhi for the first time developed the third way—the way of peaceful collective resistance. He developed this technique first in South Africa. The satyagraha campaigns there continued for eight long years.

After coming to India he began the use of the new technique of Satyagraha, first in Champaran and then in Kheda. After this he launched the non-co-operation movement of 1920. He withdrew the Satyagraha campaign in 1922 after the outbreak of mass violence at Chauri Chaura. He showed uncommon courage in admitting what he called his Himalayan blunder and faced temporary criticism and unpopularity. His next essay in mass peaceful resistance was the famous Dandi March in 1930, which changed the face of the country. It must be noted that non-co-operation was a bigger and more revolutionary step and might have created greater cohesion, discipline and sense of social responsibility among the people,

if it was given a trial again. But law-breaking on a large scale yielded immediate results and caught the imagination of the people. It needed less preparation and a smaller degree of inner self-discipline. It yielded tangible political dividends. But it was also capable of being used for baser purposes. Gandhi's liberal contemporaries like Dr Annie Besant, Rt. Hon. Srinivasa Shastri, Shri C. Y. Chintamani and others had pointed out that Gandhi's methods would boomerang on the Swaraj Government if and when it came into existence. It cannot be denied that their prophecy has not been falsified. The way people are resorting to intimidation and coercion by starting "bandhs" and "fasts" and breaking laws for flimsy reasons has become a grave social problem.

Gandhi definitely widened the scope of constitutional action by introducing the principle of civil disobedience as one of the inalienable rights of free citizens. Unfortunately the conditions he had laid down for civil disobedience are observed far more in the breach.

Whether it was satyagraha or civil disobedience Gandhi attached great importance to the pre-conditions. He wanted the satyagrahi to be free from personal hatred or anger. He wanted him to know that he was demonstrating the truth of his cause by self-suffering. It was essentially an individual action. It could also be a group action, but it was necessary that every person involved should be intelligently aware of the issues and of his personal stake.

Gandhi built up the Congress organization and brought men and women of different talents and temperaments from all sections of society to work together in a disciplined way. He emphasised the need of constructive service. He established ashrams all over India. He wanted to create a band of servants of the people who devoted themselves to the well-being of the most depressed and backward sections of the community living in the seven lakh villages of India. The Khadi and Gramodyog Sangh, the Harijan Sevak Sangh, the Goraksha Mandal, Basic

Education, Rashtrabhasha Sangha, Nature Cure were some of the items of his constructive work; he brought into existence various organizations and collected a group of dedicated and specially trained men in various fields of social work. The constructive workers confined their activities to the village level and took little part in day-to-day politics. This was a new technique of organization he had introduced. It had far-reaching results, even if these were often intangible. Gandhi's constructive programme made the Congress organization a people's movement with its branches in the distant villages.

Anyone who visited Sevagram between 1933 and 1939 saw a picture of the multiple effort of national regeneration that was going on there. *It was his laboratory and workshop of Gram Swaraj.* Gandhi was its chief director and inspiration. There were collected in his ashram devoted social workers who had taken pains to acquire the expertise in some branch of the many-sided constructive programme which was being carried on round about Wardha. Dr J. C. Kumarappa's Village Industries Association was developing a new economics for the backward villages; Krishnadas Gandhi was trying to improve the spinning wheel; the Aryanayakams were working at basic education; Kakasaheb Kalelkar was working for Rashtra Bhasha Prachar; Jamnalal Bajaj was devoting himself to Goseva. There were also thinkers like Kishorlal Mashruwala and Mahadeo Desai who were helping Gandhiji in editing his weekly *Harijan*. Vinobaji at Pawanar had taken up scavenging work in neighbouring villages and he was teaching spinning with the *takli*; he was also engaged in teaching the Upanishads, the Geeta and the writings of our medieval saints. Thus his culture of village reconstruction was fully comprehensive and it catered for manual as well as spiritual development. Gandhiji could declare with a measure of self-confidence that the fulfilment of the constructive programme was Swaraj. Here was a most earnest and serious attempt to create a new social order by tackling the basic problems of

poverty which were the central feature of India's seven lakh villages. It was a revolutionary effort to create a new consciousness and awakening and capacity at the grass-roots level of the Indian village. In almost every district all over India there were one or two Ashrams of this type. It is interesting to note that Gandhi kept himself aloof from the problem of land ownership at that time. Actually agriculture is the hub and centre of any such programme. Even so, Gandhi wanted to allow sleeping dogs to lie for some time; he concentrated on awakening the villagers in the most depressed and backward areas by giving them a minimum of economic relief. If this programme were followed more vigorously and if it had been able to secure the active help of a larger section of intelligent workers, it was not beyond the scope of possibility to have a couple of talukas in every district where the Gram Panchayat would have functioned efficiently and vigorously; they could have become patterns of gram swaraj or soviets. Gujarat and Tamilnad were in the forefront of this constructive enterprise. It should be noted here that Gandhi was not dogmatic or doctrinaire in his social outlook; he led the peasants of Champaran against the British planters. His constructive programme never raised the slogan of class war between landlords and tillers. Yet in 1942 he told Louis Fischer that he would be prepared to end functionless ownership of feudal landlords. All this dynamism is part of his theory of Trusteeship of Social Resources; he was never a conservative supporter of the status quo. The Communists failed to grasp this progressive aspect of Gandhi's social philosophy. He always insisted that economic equality was the foundation of his constructive programme.

Gandhi's fast against Ramsay Macdonald's Communal Award, which had given a separate electorate to the Harijans, is one of his characteristic contributions to the growth of democracy and equality in India. He followed it up by a strenuous campaign all over the country to abolish untouchability. He created a strong public

opinion among the Hindus that untouchability had no religious sanction and was a blot on Hindu civilization. The encrusted tradition-bound orthodoxy was shaken to its roots and many a hallowed shrine and temple like the Guruvayur Temple was thrown open to the Harijans. If the new Constitution of India has been able to declare it an offence to treat anyone in public places as an untouchable it is largely because the climate of opinion was already created by Gandhi and men like Swami Dayanand, Jyotiba Phule and Dr B. R. Ambedkar. But even here events have moved in unexpected ways. Dr Ambedkar and his followers have renounced Hinduism. They have become Buddhists. Politically, their antagonism to caste Hindus has mollified somewhat but real social integration has still to come. There are barely six or seven per cent villages where Harijans and the caste Hindus take water from the same wells freely and openly !!

Gandhiji strove valiantly for Hindu-Muslim unity. He sponsored the Khilafat agitation in 1920. In 1924 he undertook a fast of 21 days at the house of Mohammed Ali who was then the president of the Indian National Congress to bring about amity between the Hindus and the Muslims. In 1934, the Congress neither accepted nor rejected the Communal Award as far as it related to the Muslim representation in the Legislatures ! It was striving to bring about a measure of understanding between the two communities. Again, in 1928, a determined effort was made to hammer out a formula embodying a common agreement. But it did not succeed. Gandhiji met Mr Jinnah twice or thrice and had long discussions with him, but it yielded no results. When freedom came in 1947, Gandhi was in Calcutta and Noakhali walking through the flames of communal frenzy and trying to bring sanity, fearlessness and hope to the poor men and women who had suffered untold hardships. His last fast and his martyrdom were also at the altar of communal harmony between Hindus and Muslims. Gandhi felt that Indians must learn to live in peace and amity with

all the differences of culture, language, religion and race that exist in society. Men and women, he taught, must be fearless, and truthful and kindly to one other. 'Love thy neighbour as thyself and treat every citizen of India as your neighbour', he said. That to him was the essence of patriotism.

Gandhi considered India's subjugation only as a symptom of a deep-rooted social disease. Social disintegration and atomization was the enemy. Let there be social mobility, responsibility and solidarity and 'your chains will fall away like dew' was his message. Even his trusted lieutenants like Nehru did not quite understand his non-political approach. Gandhiji's commitment to the programme of khadi and Harijan service, however valuable, he felt, was essentially reformist.

Gandhi may be said to be the last in the line of leaders of the Indian Renaissance. Raja Rammohan Roy, Dadabhai Naoroji, Justice Ranade, Yogi Aurobindo believed that India had a message for the world. This ancient land had survived many ups and downs for thousands of years because it had a message for the world. India's political freedom was only a means to awaken her latent creative capacities. They believed that India had formerly for long years experimented in the science of the soul or spirit. She had developed Vedant, the science of self-realisation. It would be free India's contribution, they felt, to offer an example of spiritual understanding and poise, freedom from hatred to the world. In the early years of this century, there raged an acrimonious controversy in India about the priorities of public work. Does social reform precede or follow political freedom? There was a clash between the moderates and extremists. Tilak, Aurobindo and the extremists asserted that political freedom must have precedence; everything else came afterwards. 'Swaraj is my birthright', said Tilak and this point of view soon became more and more popular and questions of social reform were completely relegated to the background and often forgotten. As a result, the nationalist movement

became socially conservative in outlook. Gandhi strove to create a synthesis between the two schools. His programme for political freedom was entirely made up of work for social reform which became the means of closer contact with the rural masses. Solicitude for and identification with the villager became the badge of patriotism. The fact that India lives in villages was given the pride of place in Gandhi's campaign for freedom. It must be noted that to this broad-based sympathy for the poor and starving villager, Gandhi had brought only the traditional missionary programmes of relief. He was opposed to scientific birth-control methods and considered them morally harmful. This unscientific and moralist outlook is even today often espoused in the name of Gandhi. The Gandhians do not seem to appreciate the simple fact that the rate of population growth is a crucial factor of development, economics, and sociology. Similarly, in a society riddled with anti-social tendencies like black-marketing and adulteration of foodstuffs, under-invoicing and over-invoicing and evasion of taxes, Gandhian thinkers give undue importance to items like prohibition, whereas they oppose a system of comprehensive control of industry and trade. They do not seem to have been able to shake off their laissez-faire past.

After World War II and the use of the atom bomb on Hiroshima in Japan the whole military strategy of world powers underwent a radical change. The era which began with the landing of Vasco da Gama in Calicut in 1498 some 450 years ago came to an end on 15th August 1947. The age of naval supremacy was over. Britain was compelled by the logic of history to divest herself of her colonies. Transfer of power was effected by mutual agreement. This was almost in the nature of a miracle. In order to maintain their position in the Indian Ocean and Asia, the British had given full support to the Muslim League and backed its efforts to partition India. The question of 600 Indian States threatened to balkanize the country. It must be recognised that the Congress had

little choice in the matter of the Partition. The Congress leaders helplessly accepted the Partition Plan.

Sardar Patel and Pandit Nehru felt that this was a lesser evil. Any other course would expose the country to a long civil war. Gandhi who had never compromised with evil all his life could not accept the argument of expediency. He argued for days with his two colleagues, but in the end decided not to oppose them. He even advised Khan Abdul Gaffar Khan to abstain from taking part in the plebiscite in the N.W.F.P. Gandhiji was nearly 78 then. Patel and Nehru were ready to pay the high price because they thought they were thus bringing about transfer of power peacefully. Actually, however, conditions of civil war were created in the Punjab and Bengal. Blood of innocent men and women flowed freely. Nearly half a million men and women were killed and more than a million were uprooted. The story of atrocities on displaced persons who were passing through Lahore and Amritsar as refugees were ghastly. Man showed that he could be worse than the brute. Kishenchander in his *Aur Insan Mar Gaya* has preserved for posterity a glimpse of man's most shameful and tragic fall. In Lahore, Amritsar, Rawalpindi, Noakhali and in Bihar helpless minorities were mercilessly looted, molested and killed. Few examples of such brutal cruelty by a civil population would be found in recent history. There were some notable marginal examples, amidst this cruelty, of men and women showing bravery in giving protection to the afflicted in a generous measure. It almost seemed that the prophecy of diehard bureaucrats and imperialists was coming true. The moment the British leave India, they had said, 'a ghastly civil war will reign here and rivers of blood will flow.'

It was a tragedy that all the discipline of non-violence that India had imbibed for nearly a quarter of a century should break down so completely in the hour of crisis. Some men from all the three major communities, the Hindus, the Muslims and the Sikhs, showed that they

could be capable of fiendish wickedness. Women, children and old men were the worst sufferers. This tragic aspect of the post-partition riots exposed how inadequate our non-violent professions were to be in the hour of crisis. Later events as late as in 1964 at Rourkela and Jamshedpur also underlined this fact.

It is not easy for us even to imagine the anguish of Gandhiji's heart. This phase of his life was something like the dark night of the soul and his final end was like a resurrection. His pilgrimage in Noakhali will remain one of the brightest chapters in his life. He proved that no disaster could shake his faith in the fundamental goodness of man and in the efficacy of non-violence. In conditions of civil war in 1947 he became a one-man force in Bengal and preserved peace there. The Pathan Afridis in Pakistan had attacked the State of Kashmir, and forced the Maharaja to accede to the Indian Union. The Indian Government had to rush troops to Srinagar to protect the State.

That means peaceful transfer of power had taken the shape of a civil war. The responsibility of the Indian Government was greater, because even after partition nearly five hundred million Muslims had remained in India and similarly two or three crore Hindus had remained in Pakistan. Gandhiji's last fast and his martyrdom for Hindu-Muslim unity for which he worked all his life showed how he stood unflinchingly for his principles undaunted by the consequences.

Shri Jayaprakash Narayan had approached Gandhi and asked him if he would undertake to guide those who wanted to oppose the Partition Plan. But Gandhi did not encourage him.

Since September 1946 when Pandit Nehru and Sardar Patel had entered the Viceroy's Executive Council a parting of ways between them and Gandhi had come. He continued to the very end to remain a friend and philosopher to them and to help the people of India to learn to live sanely and amicably with one another.

Theoretically speaking, Gandhiji was a philosophical anarchist. Since his days in South Africa he had developed a technique of protest, of dissent and of disobedience, of sturdy individualism. He had not developed a theory or a method of governing a country non-violently. His dictum was that that government was best which governed least. He was unable to appreciate the post-war concept of a comprehensive welfare state. He felt that faith in the bigger and better future can become an enemy to present liberty. He always weighed promises — 'Jam tomorrow in the scale of bread and butter to-day'. He felt that there was an ever-present danger of grandiose planning from above becoming an excuse for the continuation of class privileges. Widening the circle of privilege by admitting fresh partners into the charmed circle is not the way to abolish privilege. He was also sceptical about an outlook that wants to sacrifice the present for attaining a bright future at an uncertain date.

However, it is not as though Gandhiji alone had failed to work out his constructive programme in the changed context of political freedom and rapid industrialization. It is equally true that India's planners have failed to take adequate note of the widening gulf between town and village which is accentuated by the advance of urban industry. This problem becomes more acute as the village has to bear a larger than proportionate share of the growing burden of population while it has a less than proportionate share in the rising scale of national income per capita. This raises far-reaching problems of social adjustment and economic measures to meet the disparity. These have still to be worked out by Indian economists as well as by the planners. It cannot be said that Gandhi had failed to arrest the attention of thinking men to the gravity of this problem which pervades all aspects of social life and becomes the single significant cause of political instability and tensions in Indian life.

It became clear that the line Pandit Nehru and Sardar Patel had taken of creating a welfare democracy through

planned economic development was not the Gandhian line. Gandhi would have liked planning to start from the village, to begin with compact regions and create conditions of near self-sufficiency there. He discussed these points with Nehru sometime in 1946. Nehru told him that a state could not preserve its freedom in the modern world unless it develops an urban industrial complex soon. Urbanization must be hastened, he told him. The main factor which forced India away from the Gandhian path in economic reconstruction is the fact of our rapidly growing population. Gandhian economics might work for a time if the population was more or less stationary, and even then there would be far less scope for raising the standards of living of the lowest income groups. India was keen to bring her submerged people above the subsistence level. This called for bold and ambitious planning.

It is unfair to say that Nehru and Patel betrayed Gandhi. Nehru had declared his faith in rapid industrialization and an economic plan for building a socialist society here. All nationally conscious men and women in India looked forward to rapid industrialization and a general rise in the standards of living of the mass of our people as had been achieved in Japan and countries of the West. That is one of the natural urges that accompanies nationalism. So the conflict that arose was not about personal loyalty but a matter of social perspective and principles, revivalism versus modernism, about a strong industrial (and military) state versus a commonwealth of barely self-sufficient agricultural communities.

The country had accepted Gandhi's non-violence as a political expediency. Gandhiji had agreed to lead them to political freedom in the hope that they would be converted to his ideas in the process. But freedom came unexpectedly too early because of world conditions and therefore the task of civilizing our nationalism, of spreading the doctrine of 'Vaishnav Jan' or 'Sthita prajna' among the wide masses, rural and urban, re-

mained unaccomplished. Nehru's plans for building up a new welfare state in India had the support of the people. That is what they also wanted. Gandhi had rarely talked about the ideas he had expressed in his book *Hind Swaraj* since he took up the leadership of the freedom struggle. On the contrary, he assured people that he had no desire to impose his 'fads' on them. He wanted to help them to attain freedom.

Since 1908, when he wrote *Hind Swaraj*, a veritable technological revolution had been achieved the world over. Gandhi did not re-define his attitude to machine production in terms of the new jet age. However, his position in regard to the new age can be summed up in his own words thus: 'The salvation of India lies in its forgetting all it has learnt in the past fifty years. Railways, telegraphs, hospitals, lawyers, doctors and the rest, must one and all disappear and the so-called upper classes must learn conscientiously, piously and thoroughly to lead the life of a simple peasant because they recognise that this is the life that bestows real happiness upon us'.

On both sides the agreement was clear. It was to last only till the attainment of freedom. Both sides acted honourably and parted company truthfully. They should have proclaimed this fact more clearly. Gandhi passed away too soon after freedom and those who took the responsibility of governing the country were eager to appropriate the Gandhian trade mark and they had no need to declare that they had discarded the policy of revivalism and embarked on modernism. Had not Gandhi chosen Nehru as his heir knowing full well that he stood for modernization and a strong social democratic state? Nehru started his policy of economic development with its emphasis on heavy industries, electric power and applied technology. It would be of great value for students of economics to study the working of the Khadi and Village Industries Commission and the evaluation reports to understand how difficult it is for village industries and handicrafts to expand in a social setting of

growing urbanization. The Planning Commission spends some two hundred crore rupees every year on this programme as a form of rural unemployment relief and as a tribute to Gandhiji's sacred memory.

Gandhiji had hoped to tame Indian nationalism. Instead of Blood and Iron, he hoped it would represent unity, sympathy and co-operation. He had practised with a masterly devotion and thoroughness what Vivekanand, Aurobindo and Tilak had vaguely preached. God must come in the form of bread and employment here, he had told Rabindranath. Feeding the half-starved, half-naked millions of India was his 'Sadhana'. 'Back to the village' was his message. He wanted to build up self-sufficient communities at the village level. He had organized a band of devoted men who had acquired some know-how of village craft and village life. The *Geeta* was their guide and inspiration. Vaishnav Jan or Sthitaprajna was their ideal. This was the missionary band of social workers, the Gandhi Seva Sangh he had built—men who had taken the eleven ashram vows. Free India had no glamour for this revivalism. It was impatient to be modern. It did not care to stop and assess what price would have to be paid; and it is going ahead headlong in this attempt, to create an industrialised society. The nucleus of modern civilization is the machine. Instead of being appreciated, the effort to train men and women to build a non-violent society that Gandhi Ashrams were doing, was often ridiculed. The hypocrisy of the ashramite was an easy target for playwrights and critics.

To diagnose an endemic disorder is not the same thing as eradicating it from the body politic. Gandhi was profoundly correct in tracing alien domination to the disintegration of Indian society created by caste-exclusiveness, the current religion of touch-me-not that was practised within the Hindu social order. He worked as very few have done all his life for creating an integrated society; but he failed to find a 'chemical' which would dissolve the separatist clots in the blood stream of Indian society.

His most sincere and ardent efforts to win the confidence of the Muslims and Harijans did not bear fruit. While he was respected universally as a saintly person he was never able to win their allegiance over the heads of their own caste leadership. The Muslim still remains largely unreconciled. He is an 'outsider' in the Indian society. The Harijans and other hill tribes are also outside the pale of Hindu society. The sense of belonging has not come to them. Irredentist pulls will continue to be felt for a long time to come by Indian society. It is a sociological and not only a political problem. Marxism and other radical ideological creeds have also no easy solution for this problem of alienation. We have to create a well-knit community united for the realization of shared objectives and aspirations.

Social travail is inevitable. A society of five hundred millions is trying to walk out of its feudal frame-work and attitudes and adopting industrialization and urbanization. What happened in the Western countries two hundred years ago is happening in India. The period of adjustment is drastically curtailed. New techniques have to be devised to ease the transition.

Let us accept the simple fact in all humility that the 'Avatar of Nationalism' of which Shri Aurobindo spoke or the Vaishnava Humanism which Vivekananda and Gandhiji hoped to create in India while fighting for political freedom has not incarnated itself here. Nationalism is tribalism. It is wedded to power, and one cannot fool with it. One has to play the game, knowing full well all its implications. Gandhi's complete identification with the nationalist movement has earned martyrdom for him but he failed to tame and civilize nationalism. Mazzini's Italy is not free, Gandhi had said, because there was so much poverty in Italy and still Italy spent vast amounts on its armed forces. If Gandhi was alive he would say this from the housetops and tell the nation that it was a betrayal to spend nearly half the budget of a beggarly country on its military expenditure. No other colonial

country in Asia and Africa had such a strong and radical nationalist movement as in India. No other country produced such a galaxy of leaders for nearly a hundred years and yet the quality of public life in India is not radically different, the human factor is much the same, here as in other countries of Asia and Africa.

Rabindranath Tagore had uttered a warning that if we cherished the desire of paying our all to buy a political nationality it would be as absurd as if Switzerland had staked her existence on the ambition to build up a navy to compete with that of England. A vocal minority in the Indian parliament and a section of nationalist opinion outside is anxious that the Indian Government should embark upon the production of an atom bomb because China has already twice exploded the device. This is all in the logic of nationalism. After China's aggression the peace movement in India has lost its inspired militancy. Gandhi would have liked India to develop a peaceful technique of meeting the challenge of the atom bomb. On the contrary, nationalist ambition is to become a strong military state possessing atomic weapons.

As early as in September 1920 Rabindranath had said, 'We need all the moral force which Mahatma Gandhi represents and which we alone in the world can represent. That such a precious treasure should be cast on the frail barque of politics and subjected to the incessant lashing of the waves of conflicting and irritated passions is a serious misfortune for India, whose mission is to awaken the dead to life by soul-fire.' The wasting of spiritual resources on problems which, when considered in the light of abstract moral truth, are unworthy is to be regretted. *It is criminal to transform moral force into force.* This is a harsh judgement. But as one looks back on Gandhi's noble adventure, there is much truth in what the poet has said. In trying to spiritualize politics, Gandhi sometimes laid himself open to the charge of *corruptio optimi pessima*. It means, 'If things of the highest quality are befouled, extreme can be the befoulment.'

There was expediency in it. The preconditions he always emphasised were never seriously fulfilled. Therefore, satyagraha did not build up social character. Albert Schweitzer has said, 'Gandhi was confident that by the non-worldly he can completely spiritualise and ennoble what is worldly, and he really seriously believed that he can practise passive resistance entirely in the spirit of freedom from hatred and of love.'

'The fact that Gandhi has united the idea of Ahimsa to the idea of activity directed on the world has the importance not merely of an event in the thought of India but in that of humanity. Through him the attention of ethics is again directed to a fact which has been too much neglected, namely that the use of force does not become ethically permissible because it has an ethical aim but that in addition it must be applied in a completely ethical disposition.

'Most often he has applied the principle of passive resistance without leaving his opponent the necessary time to come to meet him half-way. There is in his character a vehemence which prevents him from patiently letting his confidence rest in the purely spiritual operation of an idea. He has never succeeded in altogether controlling the agitation within his breast.'

When we complain of the loss of a sense of moral purpose and decency, of corruption and intrigue and blind power rivalry that is growing in Indian society we are proclaiming that Gandhi has failed in making a deeper impact on us. If the people betray their humanity it only shows that the effect of Gandhi's teaching was very superficial. Probably it has been so of all great teachers! The inertia in man resists any fundamental change.

Vinoba is the only person in India who is carrying on the noble experiment in satyagraha which Gandhiji initiated. He has that sense of urgency, of breaking the human atom to make man a harmonious social unit in the factual sense of the word. His life is a continuous and shining example of satyagraha. The *gramdan* move-

ment and the *padyatra* he has carried on during the last fifteen years is a shining example of what Gandhi had worked for all his life. Vinoba has refused to be distracted by any other challenge except the land question. He has undertaken no fast nor resorted to 'civil disobedience', in spite of the pressure of colleagues and people who are smarting under various grievances. He has refused to occupy the centre of the stage. By his consistent action he has given a lie to the idea that satyagraha of Gandhiji's conception is a patent remedy like an aspirin which anyone can dispense for quick relief from pain. After freedom, when under adult franchise men and women of the country choose their Government, law breaking assumes a different dimension. Martin Luther King is fighting a non-violent battle for the civil rights of coloured people in the U.S.A. very bravely under trying circumstances. He is also in the Gandhian tradition.

Satyagraha is a way of life and not a mere emergency measure of resistance. The *gramdan* movement in India is a noble and genuine movement of the Gandhian type. Such efforts must needs remain small, and should be carried out on a limited scale. It cannot become a mass movement. The desire to compete with the Marxists and put forth a moral equivalent of class war has stepped down the whole concept of satyagraha. It has become just 'force' with very little of the spirit in it. Unless the spirit of man is awakened and is pitted against brute force naturally and spontaneously there can be no real satyagraha. It is not enough anymore merely to create a 'moral equivalent of war'. The whole idea of war, of all sense of conflict needs to be transcended, and a sane and peaceful world of free and equal men has to be created. Gandhiji's life will ever remain a pole star and inspiration for any such effort anywhere in the world for years to come.

I have no desire to single out any particular group for denigration. All the same I would like to plead with the

leaders of the Congress party not to seek to discharge two discordant functions simultaneously: that of taking part in the governance of the country, fighting elections, cringing to get nominations to the upper houses of legislatures and the other places of patronage under the Government and also in the same breath to try to function as high priests of Gandhian thought. The two roles do not harmonise. Congress leaders are welcome to control the Gandhi Nidhi and carry on some social service activities under its auspices. They are more or less innocuous. They are in the nature of doing formal religious ceremonies in a *devasthan* or a church. They satisfy the devotional element in us. But Congress leaders should be honest and humble enough to realise that Gandhi's thought has to be propagated first and last by personal life. A Home Minister, who has to order the police to open fire on unruly crowds once or twice a week cannot also claim the luxury of laying down the law with respect to Gandhian thought. It is sanctimonious to do anything of this kind.

Brisk preparations are afoot for celebrating the birth centenary of the Mahatma. The Central Government and the State Governments have set up various committees to prepare elaborate plans. They are all sincere in their devotion to Gandhi but we owe it to this great revolutionary saint that we do not relegate him so completely to our pantheon and merely idolise him. We have to transform our lives radically if we desire to pay homage to this great leader of ours. Why is it necessary to mark time till 1969 dawns? Is the inner response to Gandhi's noble example likely to be different in 1969 to what it has been during the last 20 years? Can propaganda ever create inner faith?

Let us not try to proclaim any 'ism' or ideology in his name and try to whip up mass enthusiasm for a time. Even in Russia the charm and faith in hide-bound Marxian ideology and a brave new millennium is visibly losing its appeal. Let us understand the unspoken needs

## THE IMPACT ON POSTERITY

of the people, share their privations and live fearlessly, honestly and in kindly co-operation with all. What we need above all is an inner searching of the heart and a passion to live simply and truthfully in harmony and co-operation with one's social environment.

negotiating.

I have full respect for the man: Goodie.











